

Theatrical - 1915

Individual Troupes

TOO MANY COLORED ACTS AND COLORED ACTORS are trying to get by on the strength of their successes of former years. The tendency of many in the profession who have enjoyed considerable reputation to rest on their oars and consider their former successes the ultimate in achievement is one of the greatest contributory causes to the present stagnation in colored theatricals. The lesser lights of the stage are quick to emulate the greater, inasmuch that they, too, after having achieved what they consider one or two successes in any particular line become imbued with the idea that their position in the theatrical firmament is established and secure. This attitude of mind has automatically limited the progress of the colored actor. And the fact that it is a self-imposed limit makes it all the more inexcusable and regrettable.

THIS IS A PROGRESSIVE ERA AND THE COLORED actor, generally speaking, hasn't kept pace with the times. He has been lost in the shuffle with few exceptions. The world has moved ahead, but the colored actor is standing where he was five or ten years ago. Then he might have been in front, but the swift procession has passed him and now he brings up the rear. He might have been a wonder yesterday, but this is to-day. And to-day has so many wonders of its own that yesterday's are easily forgotten. It's not what you were that the world asks, but what you are now.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED. SENSATIONS OF YESTERDAY are the common-place things of to-day. Even unusual things create only a slight tremor. Earthquakes are accepted as incidents and wars as episodes. Children of twelve are dabbling in advanced algebra and geometry, and seeking the fourth dimension. The public's taste in theatricals has jumped ahead, too. It demands more than formerly and that more must be up to date and good. The pace is fast, but the actor must keep it or drop out of the race.

A FEW YEARS BACK THE PACE WAS NOT SO SWIFT. Then was the colored actor in his glory, at the height of his prosperity, and in the midst of years of plenty. Syncopation at this time was new—a genuine novelty, sensation and craze. And none could interpret this music as effectively as the colored man. The public couldn't get enough of it to satisfy them and the colored actor was in demand everywhere. All was well for a while until the white actors caught on to and mastered the tricks of expression, the rythmical peculiarities of this kind of music, and learned to sing it as well, and in many cases better, than the colored brother. Then white composers mastered the knack of writing these songs and it was all over. Everybody, white and colored, was soon doing them with the result that the colored actor's vogue waned greatly.

NOT ONLY IN SONG, BUT IN DANCING, THE WHITE actor first imitated, then mastered, and finally excelled, in some instances, the colored actor at his own game, at the same time studying carefully his dialect, mannerisms and dress. On such a large scale was this imitation carried on that ere long the colored actor

and colored acts ceased to be the novelty that they once were. World-wide imitation made him a common-place and not a unique figure as formerly on the stage.

BUT ONE WOULD NATURALLY THINK THAT WITH the long lead in this particular direction that the colored actor had, that he could not be passed. The truth of the matter is that he was caught napping—asleep at the post. It took time for the white actor to catch up, but he has done it. It took effort, but he has spent it. It took patience, but he acquired it. So good has the white actor become in this direction that were one of the best white blackface artists to appear on the stage simultaneously with a colored actor in blackface, it would be almost impossible to distinguish between the two.

THE RACE IS NOT ENTIRELY LOST TO THE COLORED actor unless he is a quitter and that accusation cannot be justly laid at the door of many of them. Let him offer to run his white brother another heat on the winner take all basis. But he cannot afford to be caught napping as before, when content with an apparently safe lead he rested on his oars and floated with the tide, only to be passed by the other fellow before he could get his stroke again.

THE COLORED ACTOR HAS PROVEN HIS ABILITY in times past. He has shown that he can hold his own, but in recent years a noticeable indifference, a lack of initiative and energy, a disinclination to tackle anything new for fear it will not go big, has crept into the rank and file of him. He has been too fond of parading the skeletons of former successes before the public. He has practically been standing still—running on low speed, as an auto enthusiast would say.

SPEED UP, ACTOR BROTHER. QUIT LIVING IN THE past or on memories of the past. You made good then all right, but we want you to make good now. Give us something new, something worth while, and something definitely characteristic of our race. The field for you has narrowed in one direction but broadened in several others. You have more material to draw on than ever before, for your people are richer in race history and accomplishment. New and good ideas are as thick as mosquitoes in a Jersey marsh. It's up to you to go out and bag a few or have some one bag a few for you. Forget about your past reputation. Reputations tarnish like anything else unless constantly polished. What have you done to polish yours lately?

THEATRICAL COMMENT.

(BY LESTER A. WALTON.)

WITH Bert Williams standing out in bold relief as the principal fun-maker of "Ziegfeld Follies of 1915," which opened Monday evening in a blaze of glory at the New Amsterdam Theatre, and with the announcement given out this week by the Shuberts that they had signed Charlie Hart, formerly of Avery & Hart, for a term of three years to appear in Broadway musical productions, the opinion pre-

vails that the real colored comedian is soon to come into his own.

"Real colored comedian" is used advisedly, for with the exception of Bert Williams real colored comedians on Broadway have been a rare article in recent years. There have been blackface comedians galore, however, such as the Jolsons and Tinneys, some of whom are clever, but no more clever than some of our real colored fun-makers who would make good if given a chance.

Like the modern dance, the blackface

comedian is all the rage just now, and in most of the big Broadway productions you will find one, be he the real thing or imitation. Of course, with the real thing little inconsistencies crop out now and then to embarrass and discourage him. You seldom see the picture of a Simon-pure in the daily paper, under cork or otherwise, although the imitation is frequently published in the dailies surrounded by a bevy of white beauties. Nor is the real thing permitted to work on the stage with maidens fair but the imitation, no matter how black, has the privilege of romping about with damsels fair in such lively fashion and in such close proximity as to sometimes transfer some of the cork to the pink-cheeked members of the fair sex, which stunt is oftentimes done "by accident on purpose," and invariably causes a big laugh.

A very interesting, as well as bewildering, subject is "The Psychology of Color Prejudice," where you will find absurdities and incongruities growing wild in prodigal profusion. But these are adverse conditions due to a lack of knowledge of things, and time alone will bring about a happier and a more natural adjustment. After all, it is the opportunity in life we first want, and with this fundamental ambition realized all else follows in consecutive order as do the seasons in the year.

For instance, for the past five or six seasons Bert Williams has been doing pioneer work, and the path of the pioneer is never strewn with roses. "Sacrifice after sacrifice and concession after concession had to be made while blazing a way for himself and others, and it is gratifying to note that in this beautiful June time of roses there are encouraging evidences that Mr. Williams' efforts are bearing fruit.

So those of us who lament over the fact that the daily papers evince a preference for publishing photos of white comedians under cork and in comical poses to those colored comedians, whether under cork or face clean and all dressed up in their Sunday best, etc., let us consider that after all such inconsistencies are trivial when the real big question—Opportunity—is taken into consideration. To earn an honest livelihood is one of the big questions in life, and there are thousands of people, both colored and white, who would be perfectly willing to have their pictures kept out of the papers if given an opportunity to make a big salary on Broadway as a comedian. Vanity is one

thing; bread and butter is another.

The Lafayette Theatre.

Some bill at the Lafayette Theatre the first half of the week, and even the heat failed to lessen the enthusiasm of the patrons, who were most generous in their applause. The headliners were Shelton Brooks and Clarence Bowen who were a hit on the big time last winter. This is truly an entertaining turn and both young men shine brilliantly from a musical standpoint. Clarence Bowen is one of the sweetest singers in vaudeville, and he is developing into a finished artist, while Shelton Brooks plays the piano and sings his own compositions in a diverting manner. And he displays taste and judgment by putting over his numbers without over-exerting himself or shouting as some performers deem it necessary. This act is really of big-time caliber.

The biggest applause receivers on the bill were Hampton and Bowman, who went big at each performance, in some instances stopping the show. The act is stronger now than when seen at the Lafayette during the winter with three people. Hampton & Bowman have finally whipped into shape a turn which should make them sit up and take notice on any bill, large or small. Their work as singers stamps them as artists.

The Kratons, considered the best hoop-rolling act in the business, are back at the Lafayette after an absence of several months, and they work with their accustomed vim and win the admiration of the audience with their great work with the hoops.

The other acts on the bill the first half

were the Metropolitan Players, real actors in a real sketch; Mack & Sherwin and Hecklow & Roller.

Brooks & Bowen, the Kratons and Hampton & Bowman have been held over for the second half of the week.

McKissick & Craddock and Marshall, King & Marshall were among the acts to go big the second half of last week.

The Musical Spillers will headline the bill at the Lafayette Theatre next week, and Fiddler & Shelton will top the bill the following week.

A DISASTROUS SEASON

OPINIONS differ as to the primary cause leading to the unfortunate closing of the Black Patti Company at Robert R. Church's Auditorium, Memphis, a few weeks ago. Former business representatives of Manager Rudolph Voelckel and members of the company

are endeavoring to place sole responsibility for the abrupt ending of the nineteenth season of the Black Patti Company on Mr. Voelckel, while he, in turn, is seeking to show that the people in his employ did much to bring about the unfortunate situation.

In all probabilities "hard times" did more to occasion adverse conditions than anything else. Had business been good Manager Voelckel would have been able to meet his financial obligations, there would have been no attachment proceedings instituted by Robert R. Church, and some of the members of the company would not have become disagreeable and acted outrageously, as charged.

Manager Voelckel has forwarded the following letter to THE AGE, giving his version of the incident, which is here published without comment:

To the Dramatic Editor of THE AGE:

After four successful weeks after the opening of the season in such cities and theatres as the Lafayette, New York; Standard, Philadelphia; American, Washington; Wells, Norfolk, and Academy, Richmond, the company routed south to Petersburg, Lynchburg, Charlotte, then into the States of Florida and Louisiana, thence northward to Memphis. In all, but the first four weeks, business in the South was very disastrous, and the climax was at Robert R. Church's Auditorium, Memphis, where the company's management had contracted with Mr. Church to pay him \$200 rental for two nights and one matinee. Although having two advance men to properly advertise the engagement of the Black Patti Company at the Auditorium, it was claimed by Mr. Church that this portion of the work was neglected, which is usually the excuse of local managers when business is poor.

At our opening night it was said some of the performers in the company filling minor rôles were intoxicated and that our performance (which was the same as given the first four weeks of the season) was a sad disappointment, the comedian having proven a failure as well as all the vocal numbers except the songs sung by Black Patti. This adverse report became so widely circulated that managers of theatres where the company was booked to appear wired in cancellations, stating they would not play

any drunken colored show in their theatres.

As soon as Mr. Church found this out he immediately attached my scenery, electrical effects and private sleeping car. I begged him to wait a few days for his \$200 rental, and I even went so far as to pay the expense of his representative and allow him a salary until he collected Mr. Church's debt. I appealed to him on three different occasions and pointed out to him that if he insisted in carrying out his intentions the oldest colored musical comedy company would close, which would work a severe hardship on some of my people, as my purse was depleted and my contract, the same as others, did not require me to defray their expenses back to New York should the show close.

I made every effort to continue the season, and two gentlemen came from St. Louis to Memphis with the same intent, but when they called at Church's Auditorium and were informed of the disgraceful performance given by the intoxicated members of the show they quickly became discouraged and left for their homes the next morning.

During our idleness all but ten people packed their trunks and left for their respective homes; then the actions of the balance became so unbearable that Mme. Jones (Black Patti) and her maid left for Providence, R. I., where she is receiving medical attention.

In conclusion I sincerely regret to state that I deeply deplore the circumstances which brought about such an abrupt end to the nineteenth season of the oldest colored musical comedy company on earth and caused the greatest of all colored artists to leave the company; and in closing I must further state that I was never connected with such a degraded lot of drunkards during my experience, which fact may be verified by Mme. Jones.

Again thanking you for occupying so much space in your valuable paper, I am,

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) RUDOLPH VOELCKEL.

Letters from other members of the company on the closing of the show will be published in these columns at some future date.

Brooklyn Eagle

22 April 1915
EARLY NEGRO MINSTRELSY

Sympathetic Pen-Picture of the Old Heydays.

Editor Brooklyn Daily Eagle:

I wonder if any of the readers of this interesting page ever sigh to see one of the old-time stock minstrel shows. What a treat it was when, after a hard and trying day at work, we would bundle up the better half and run down to the San Francisco Minstrels, Dan Bryant's Minstrels and Hooley's Minstrels, and laugh as the crowd laughed with you. But alas! We will never see these or their like again, and we old-timers, too, are setting our houses to rights to join the chorus "over the river."

One by one those old-time mirth-provokers passed on. First it was Dan Bryant. Can we ever forget the great benefits given by the minstrels and theatrical troupes of that day for the widows? I recall one of these given at the Academy of Music, with Bryant's Minstrels on the stage. Brockway was the "middle man"; Dave Reed as bones and McAndrews (the watermelon man) on Dan's tambo end. (These have all gone out.) The large theater was packed to the ceiling. These benefits netted the widow of Dan Bryant \$75,000. Can you name a performer in the show business today whose family, after his death, could receive such a sum from benefits?

Those old-time minstrels were favorites all the way. There was the laugh-producer, Billy Birch. Frank Moran, too. He was 72 years old. Frank was the first American negro delineator to "do" Australia, where he picked the banjo and sang "Who Likes Gravy On Der Taters?" Then Johnny Wild—ah, there was a laugh-maker for you. Johnny, when "walking up that Broadway down," always carried a big silver watch that put forth a tick like a grandfather's clock. The grim ferryman has claimed them all.

Hughey Dougherty is with us, living over at Philadelphia, and so, too, is Frank Dumont. The former sweet singer of "Old Duprez and Benedict" is manager there of the only stock minstrel company left. I envy the fun-loving people of Philadelphia.

Who of us old-timers will ever forget Billy Emerson. He delighted millions of people and made several fortunes out of his art. His liberality was known wherever he had a friend, and that was all over the land. There is no pocket in a shroud, so Billy Emerson died leaving but few dollars. He possessed the greatest voice of any "minstrel man" who ever stepped before the footlights. We shall never forget his song, "Could I Only Pick the Winner." It became known throughout the English-speaking world. And there, too, was Bobbie Newcomb. He put over the song and dance in a most fascinating way. He was honored and, of course, highly pleased when Bobbie sang one of my songs, entitled "Neath the Sweet

Bloom of the Old Apple Trees." If memory serves, the song was printed in the New York Clipper in 1874. I think the music was composed by H. P. Danks.

Yes, I sigh to watch once more the old-time curtain ascend and see them standing on the stage that row of old-time minstrels, the interlocutor, with the great expanse of white vest, with Brudders Bones and Tambo, with their velvetreen coats and large wide collars. They all seat themselves in a semicircle and the "middle man" announces the "evening overture" and then the end men's jokes, possibly something like the following:

Brother Bones—Speaking ob roosters, Mistah Johnsing, can I broke in wid a riddle 'bout de chicken?

Interlocutor—Surely, you would not have the temerity before this enlightened audience to spring the old chicken conundrums. "For example: What hen lays the most? A dead hen; or, why does a chicken cross the street; or—"

Brother Bones—No, sah! I ain't 'deavorin' to put ober any musical comedy stuff. I'm filin' de real news. Here it am: Why do de farmers paint de inside of a chicken dwellin'?

Interlocutor—Tambo, can you answer Brother Bones?

Tambo—I done don't know, 'less it is to keep the hired man busy.

Brother Bones—De reason de hay-seeds paint de inside of de henhouse is to keep the chickens from pickin' de grain out ob de wood.

Interlocutor—Brother Bones will now sing that beautiful play on words entitled "The Sexton Told the Bell," with kind regards to the comrades in melody lane.

And so the fun continued.
AN OLD-TIMER.
Brooklyn, April 17, 1915.

BLACK PATTI QUILTS THE STAGE

Famous Singer, Converted at Providence Revival, Will Henceforth Work for Cause.

Providence, R. I., February 8.—The colored theatrical arena in these parts means to be greatly agitated over the fact that one of its principal associates, Madam Sissieretta Jones, "Black Patti," has embraced religion during the revival at Congdon Street Baptist Church, held last week, and has, according to reports, severed her relation with the stage and its attractions forever.

While in this city she the guest of her mother, on Wheaton street, and after a brief rest will devote herself to the furtherance of religious work.

She is probably the leading singer of the race whose abilities and reputation is known all over the world, she having appeared and sang before most of the rulers of the world.

She was born, raised and educated in this city, which place lays claim as the starting place of her professional distinguished career.

Theatrical-1915

Individual Troupes.



**Seen and Heard
While Passing**
By Salem Tutt Whitney
With the Smart Set Co.

Walt Mason, the popular humorist, invokes the muse of the prospective Johnson-Willard membership fight in the following manner:

Willard would restore the wreath, Johnsing wrestled from the whites; with war-like zeal he grits his teeth, this hero of at least two fights. Alas, our bosoms are not warmed, when such a hero gambols in; unless black Jack is chloroformed, we do not see how Jess can win. The chances are he'll come to grief, before they're really down to biz; for while he's surely long on beef, the spark of genius is not his. He hasn't the immortal fire which made the bard of Avon great, which made Jack Milton punch his lyre, and get his laurel crown on straight. He has the lard, his heart is game, he has the height, he has the reach; but, oh, he lacks that deathless flame which makes the pugilistic peach. With confidence he goes to meet the greatest fighter on this sphere, but he will tumble o'er his feet, and cork himself and interfere. They'll bear him helpless from the ring while drearily the white face groans, and Johnsing, he will shout and sing and draw his thirty thousand bones.—Walt Mason.

We have played the principal cities of more than fifteen states, mostly one night stands. The audiences, with two or three exceptions have been mixed-colored and white. Starting with Maryland, through the Virginias, into Texas, up again through the southwest, middle west into New York state, and after a careful scrutiny of the many audiences, I have found that the Basable Theater, Syracuse, N. Y., is the only theatre in any city of consequence, that has not to some noticeable extent, drawn the color line. Even when it has been advertised that colored patrons may sit in any part of the theatre, in other cities, the tickets have been sold so as to place the bulk of the colored audience in one section of the house, usually off to one side. While the whites are allowed to occupy the choice seats, and this condition obtains for a colored attraction. We

were surprised to find segregation prevailing in the second class cities of the middle west and north. Throughout the south it is now generally understood that a colored attraction is for the special pleasure of the colored people and the whites desiring to attend, must satisfy themselves with a couple of boxes especially reserved for them and seats off on the side or in the rear of the house.

In Mexia, Texas, the balcony of the new opera house seats about 450 persons. This was reserved for colored people during our engagement there. The lower floor was held for the whites. Long before time for the performance the colored people had packed the balcony and more than 300 were clamoring for entrance at the doors. The lower floor contained not more than 200 whites, leaving room for 400 more persons. A white stage hand, looking through the peephole in the curtain, expressed the sentiments of all when he said "It's a shame to turn all those colored people away." My manager, Mr. Corwell, was pleading impotently with the local manager to allow the colored people a portion of the down stairs. The local manager was fearful that it couldn't be done without starting a race riot. I remarked to the stage manager that I was certain if the house manager would let me go before the audience and explain that this was an attraction especially given for the colored people, that it was their one opportunity in a year to see their own people perform, that some had driven twenty miles to see the show, and what a shame it would be to disappoint such persons, when the whites enjoyed the privilege of seeing shows the year around. If he could get me the chance to say this to the white audience I was certain they would give up a portion of the down stairs to the colored. The carpenter hastened out front, consulted his manager who held an animated confab with Mr. Corwell, who succeeded in convincing him that I could handle the situation with adequate diplomacy and at last obtained consent for me to make the attempt. Any one familiar with conditions in the south will realize that it was a ticklish occasion.

I stepped before the footlights, claimed their attention and proceeded. I hardly remember what I said, but I first appealed to their sense of fairplay, then to their humor, then to their reason, with the result that every white person in the audience applauded my remarks, all moved forward and allowed the colored people to sit on the same floor with them without any rope or canvas being stretched to mark the line of distinction.

I afterwards learned from Mr. Corwell that the house manager retired to the corner drug store to await the results of my attempt to temporarily upset established traditions and customs; also that some of the colored people who had clamored vociferously for the privilege to sit where their money entitled them, were afraid to occupy seats on the same floor with the whites. Back on the stage I found several members of my company backed up against the emergency exits, all claimed they anticipated a fire alarm.

I mention this circumstance because we have been unable to obtain like concessions under like conditions in some theaters in northern cities.

Colored people the country over are asked to protest vigorously against the presentation of a moving picture entitled "The Birth of a Nation." The picture is founded upon Thomas Dixon's novel, "The Clansman," that grossest of libels against the colored race. The picture play had its initial presentation at the white house and passed the board of censors. We wonder how Mr. Wilson and his associates could view the picture play favorably and consistently profess goodwill and fellowship towards the colored people under their executive regime. One scene of the picture shows a big burley negro chasing a little golden haired white girl for the purpose of outraging her. A dozen noble, God-fearing, self-sacrificing Uncle Tom's rescuing little golden haired Eva from watery graves or pointing the pathway to the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem, could not offset the incalculable harm this one scene will do the colored race.

Prof. Joel E. Spingarn of New York induced the board of censors to demand a second presentation and as a result the former approval was withdrawn. The picture play cost \$100,000 and we may rest assured that the producers will make every effort to put the play before the public in order to realize a profit upon their expenditures. It is up to the colored people in every town and city, north, south, east and west, to protest so vigorously against its presentation that it will be permanently withdrawn. Once the protest is started we will find many loyal white friends who will support us in our objections.

"Politeness is the oil which lubricates the wheels of society." Polite-

ness is an indispensable commodity to those in any business dependent upon public support for its maintenance. It is without price and easily acquired, for this reason it is remarkable that there should be such a scarcity of the lubricant among the employees of a colored business concern. It is seldom that a bunch of itinerant players like ourselves have to sprinkle with ashes, use the resin board or spike our shoes to prevent slipping on this saponaceous spermaceti.

When we enter a boarding house or hotel, we expect to be greeted by a vampire smile from the manager or proprietor; pay our board in advance; be impaled upon the hostile looks of chambermaids, waiters and waitresses, get less service and pay more for it than any other class of people. We have learned to assume an apologetic attitude towards everybody and about everything. First we let our looks denote that we are really sorry for our existence and bewail the unfavorable circumstance that forced us to impose upon their hospitality (?) and incidentally leave our hard-earned cash with them. We deplore appetites that will not be satisfied with a food show demonstration, especially when we are doing two a day; and we apologize for palates that will not be tickled with pig tails and saur-kraut for Sunday dinner when they anticipated stewed chicken or roast pork and apple sauce. We rebel against the necessity that impels us to ask for a couple of blankets to keep out the frigid weather, when there are already a sheet and a counterpane upon the bed. With this attitude of self-renunciation and by-liberal tips for what we do not receive, we sometimes find life really worth living.

Sensible men like Geo. Simpkins, of the Little Savoy cafe, Buffalo, N. Y., find it pays to be polite to patrons and that it is not amiss to try and run business by the golden rule system. Mr. Simpkins has instructed his help in the art of diffusing sunshine among the guests. Members of the company who were fortunate enough to be accommodated by Mr. Simpkins are still singing his praises. He made them feel like fellow human beings that they had a mission on earth and that it was a pleasure for him to contribute to their comfort while they were fulfilling that mission. He certainly did not overcharge them, but he shocked them speechless by voluntarily subtracting 25 per cent. from all their bills Saturday night. I heard from outsiders that Mr. Simpkins kept twenty members of a stranded company in his hotel, boarding and lodging them for more than a month without thought of remuneration. Buffalonians were exceptionally kind to the Smart Set Company and we wish them continued success and prosperity.

S. H. Dudley writes that he has many irons in the fire. At the proper time this energetic little comedian

and manager will start his anvil chorus and when the sparks begin flying they will ignite and start a conflagration that will make people sit up and take notice.

Miss Nettie Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. Willford and Mrs. Eggleston and son entertained members of the Smart Set Company at their homes in Buffalo, N. Y.

T. J. Costello, protine character artist in vaudeville, writes from Memphis, Tenn. Times are a little tight but he is getting by just the same.

P. G. Lowery, cornetist and bandmaster and the Mays brothers, musicians, are still making good in Columbus, Ohio. P. G. has many flattering offers for the coming season but he is not certain that the white tops will see him. Perhaps his fall from the bandwagon which incidentally made him climb aboard the water wagon has something to do with his resolution. P. G. and his peerless band are great favorites and drawing cards en route.

FORTY-ONE YEARS AGO.

(BY SAM LUCAS.)

FORTY-ONE years ago Callender's Georgia Minstrels was a body of strong and healthy men numbering twenty-one, but Father Time has mowed them down until there is only one stalk left standing in the field. Of all the members of that splendid company I am the sole survivor. It is mine to take up the melancholy task of writing a word of remembrance and farewell to my friend and associate of former years. As I have said, the death of Billy Kersands leaves me the sole survivor of Callender's original Georgia Minstrels. We were together in 1872, 1873, and a part of 1874, during which period we toured the principal towns and cities throughout the United States. At that time the stars of this organization were Bob Hight, Billy Kersands, Pete Deavenear, Dick Little and Sam Lucas. In our band paraded before the show Billy would be on one side and I on the other leading the procession. Being young, we were both natural mashers, and at that time the minstrels were the people of the land.

Billy was unfortunate in the matter of his early education. He could neither read nor write. I took great delight in teaching him his songs for the stage. Among them were "Angel Gabriel," "Old Aunt Jemima" and "Mary's Gone With a Coon." As he sang them in his unique way it was beyond the power of

imitation. Nature had done much for him in natural talents and originality. Billy's big mouth and the skill with which he handled it, and his pretty teeth, were a great asset. It was the songs he sang and the smiles he wore that made the sun shine everywhere.

I often sit and think of the funny stories he used to tell me of himself and the old folks at home when he was a boy. Among them, one of his duties was to fill and light his grandmother's pipe, which task had to be performed many times a day. Billy, by way of diversion on one occasion, placed a little charge of gunpowder in the bowl of the pipe, piled the tobacco upon it, lighted it and passed it to his grandmother. The mild explosion which ensued gave her a great shock and him amusement.

His main specialty was his dance, "The Essence of Old Virginia." In that dance he would lie flat on his stomach and beat first his head and then his toes against the stage to keep time with the orchestra. He would look at his feet to see how they were keeping time, and then looking out at the audience he would say, "Ain't this nice? I get seventy-five dollars a week for doing this."

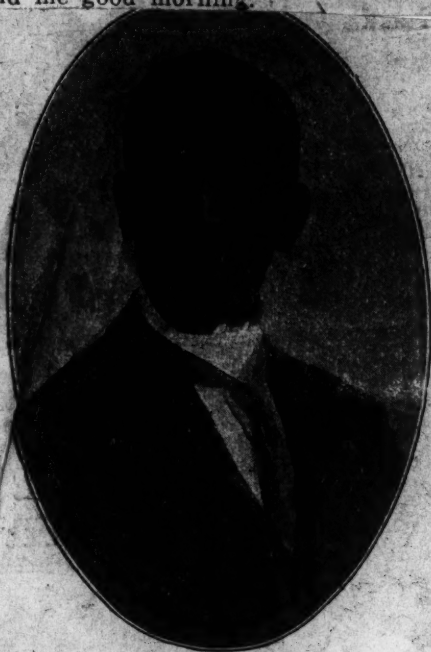
Billy Kersand's reputation was surpassed by none. In the South, after Callender's and Haverley's shows were gone he was excelled by none as a single star. The reputation he made in Europe was equally great. Billy was born in Baton Rouge, La., seventy-three years ago. He died a few weeks ago of heart disease at Artesia, New Mexico.

The minstrel was the first door of entrance opened to Negroes on the American stage, just as now men and women of the race possessing unusual talent for serious roles of legitimate drama are compelled to confine themselves to comedy. But it will not be many years before the new public will applaud the rise of the curtain upon Negro actors and musicians who will shine as stars of the first magnitude both as composers and performers of the highest forms of amusement and entertainment that have ever given interest to the stage.

By some strange fate I stand alone the last of that merry company which was the first of our race to amuse the fun-loving public. On Billy Kersand's the curtain has now gone down for the last time.

"Life! we've been long together, Thro' pleasant and thro' cloudy

weather,
Tis hard to part when friends are dear,
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear,
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not good-night, but in some
brighter clime
Bid me good morning."



SAM LUCAS

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Hal Fryer Music Co., Gaiety Theater Bldg., 1547 Broadway, New York.
Ashton-Freese Mo., Music Publishers, Bloomington, Ill.
Broadway Music Corp., Will von Tiller, Pres., 145 West 45th street, New York City.
Leo Feist Music Pub. Co., 135 West 44th street, New York City.
Robt. H. Brennen, 1433 Broadway, New York.
L. T. Adams Music Publisher, Her- rick, Ill.

Theatrical Trunks.

B. B. & B. Company, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Taylor Trunk Works, 35 East Randolph street, Chicago, Ill.
Central Trunk Works, Simms & Co., S. W. Cor. 7th and Arch streets, New York.

Theatrical Shoes.

I Miller, 1554 Broadway, New York.
Neely Brothers, 729 West Madison street, New York.
Glassberg's Shoe Stores, 511 Sixth avenue, New York.

Theatrical Wigs.

The Wiggery, 209 South State street,

Chicago, Ill.
A. M. Buch & Co., 119 North Ninth street, Philadelphia, Pa.
Klippert Mfg. Co., 46 Cooper Square, New York.
Siegman & Weil, S. W. Cor. 27th street and Madison street, New York.

Theatrical Costumes.

New York Costume Co., 140 North Dearborn, Chicago, Ill.
Chicago Costume Works, 143 North Dearborn street, Chicago, Ill.
Frank Hayden Co., 56 West 45th street, New York.
Andrews & Co., 506 South State street, Chicago, Ill.
Russell Uniform Co., 1600 Broadway, New York.
John Spicer (successor to Spicer Bros.), 86 Woodbine street, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Fritz Schoultz & Co., 19 West Lake street, Chicago, Ill.

Indianapolis, Ind.

TIME-S-

JAN 16 1915

**COLORED AUTHOR
GETS A GOLD MEDAL**

**Cast Of The Coliseum Com-
pany Show Their Appre-
ciation Of Man Who
Staged First
Pageant.**

[Special to The Indianapolis Ledger.]

ST. LOUIS, Mo., January 15.—Boli- var E. Watkins, the author of the Ne- gro pageant, which was staged by him at the Coliseum December 7-14 in con- nection with the Pan-American kir- mess, was presented Sunday afternoon with a gold medal by members of the cast and other friends. The presenta- tion was made at St. Paul's African M. E. Church, Leffingwell and Lawton avenues, by the pastor, Rev. W. Samp- son Brooks in behalf of the players.

Dr. D. W. Scott also made an ad- dress in behalf of the members of the congregation who took part in the production of the pageant. The entire cast of characters was present and sang the pageant chorus, "Firmly Stand, My Native Land."

The medal, valued at \$25, is of gold in the form of a pendant shield, en- graved with the words: "Presented to B. E. Watkins, author of the first Ne- gro pageant, given at St. Louis Coli- seum, December 7, 1914."

Watkins, who is 33 years old, is a native of Barbadoes, West Indies, and is proud of the fact that one of his ancestors was a Congo chief.

Theatrical - 1915

Individual Troupes.

By GEORGE H. N. JONES

AN ARTICLE APPEARED IN THIS COLUMN LAST week entitled, "Lazy Actors." Several actor acquaintances of the writer have since expressed their appreciation either verbally or in writing of the above mentioned article. One gentleman, an actor I presume, from the general trend of his letter, and who has seen fit to make himself partially anonymous, by virtue of the fact that he only signed the initials "B. A. B.," which may be real or fictitious, takes exception to some statements therein. His letter, exactly as it was worded, is appended in full:

March 27th, 1915.

Dear Sir:—I have been reading your stage editorials for several months past. Some were timely and hit the mark; some inconsequential, and some, this week's especially, 'way off. You accuse colored actors in general of being lazy, disinclined to think up anything original and stealing one another's ideas. Where do you get off? Perhaps the thought has never occurred to you that it is not in the least unusual for two, or even more than two, people to hit upon and put into practice the same idea at the same time, the idea having actually suggested itself to the minds of each independently of the other and the fact that the idea parallels in each case being mere coincidence. Is this stealing? Wake up! Hereafter don't make accusations unless you can prove them.

Yours sincerely,

B. A. B.

THIS LETTER IS MORE INTERESTING THAN THE general run of letters from aggrieved readers; so interesting, in fact, that I wish "B. A. B.," as he signs himself, had put his full name and address thereto. Passing over his generalities and uncompimentary remarks and otherwise it would seem that his real grievance lies in the fact that the writer apparently failed to take into consideration the possibility of two or more people conceiving and using the same idea at the same time in the same way. He asks if this should occur, which it frequently does, could I accuse either of stealing from the other?

I ANSWER HIM, "NO." THIS POSSIBILITY PRESENTED itself to the writer's mind when the article was written. I admit that two or three, or possibly five, individuals might conceive a paralleling idea at the same time. But hardly a dozen or more. When this number is using it one may safely conclude that at least more than half among that dozen appropriated the idea from the originator or originators as the case may be, and if "B. A. B." will make himself known, the writer will only too gladly accord him any amount of visual evidence of stolen ideas, cases of which he has a personal and positive knowledge.

FURTHERMORE, THE WRITER WILL ACCORD HIM verbal evidence directly from acts that have originated ideas as to other acts that have stolen them bodily. This evidence will be backed up by substantial proof as to the authenticity of the origination.

NOW COME OUT OF YOUR SHELL, "B. A. B.," AND make yourself known. If it takes a week to convince you, I'm will-

ing to spend the time, for a skeptical friend, once convinced is the best friend a fellow can have. I don't know you, but I want to, and to prove not to my satisfaction, but to yours, that what was said in last week's article, distasteful as it is to you, is true.

THERE'S A LOT OF MISSIONARY WORK TO BE DONE among the profession by those in it that have come into a thorough realization of the deplorable stagnation that actually exists. This requires men and women with the courage of their convictions. "B. A. B." evidences this quality in his argumentative letter. The only objection is that he's on the wrong side of the fence. But I feel sure that he will wake up, as he has counselled me in his letter, and come over. At least if he's in earnest he's willing to be shown. May I have the pleasure, "B. A. B."?

TEN BEST ACTS IN VAUDEVILLE

A Reviews Of The Vaudeville Stage For The Past Year

The New York American Ledger 3/27/15

New York City is the mother of American theatricals. From Broadway emanates all that is popular in the American drama. In Harlem—that portion of Harlem that we have named the "Great Black Way"—Negro Vaudeville finds herself a shrine. Many actors of the race, several new to the colored theatergoers of this city, have come like eager pilgrims to this shrine carrying with them either filthy offerings or gifts that bordered on the artistic.

It is out of the group that graced the footlights during the eventful year of 1914, that we will strive to select the ten best vaudeville acts. We will, of course exclude Bert Williams, the late Aida Walker, Rosamond Johnson and S. H. Dudley, for they belong to the major group, the Big Eight of the old days.

First, we select Lizzie Hart Dorsey. No vaudeville singer before the colored theatrical public possesses such a combination of range, dramatic power and sweetness of tone. She is without doubt one of the major singers of the race.

Second, the musical Byrons. Here is the greatest musical novelty act in vaudeville. These artists have an appreciation of technique and a

sense of artistic setting that is lacking in the majority of such acts. Third, the Blank Sisters. As interpreters of popular melody, Bir-lenna and Arceolo Blank are nearer the artistic goal than any of their rivals. They gleam romance out of the commonplace.

Fourth, the Chocolate Drops. For an act composed of ten or more with singing and refined comedy, the King and Bailey gives us the best that Harlem has seen.

Fifth, Little Feather Sinclair White. Miss White has the gift of combining emotion with technique, transforming her violin interpretations into interesting vaudeville contributions.

Sixth, Blanche Deas. Miss Deas is a singer who makes a better impression as a single than in a combination. Her voice possesses greater sweetness than range, and her interpretations are usually of the sentimental ballad variety.

Seventh, Miller and Lyles. In their sketch "Blessed is Ignorance" these young comedians who appeared at Hammerstein's last winter, portray the lowest type of Negro life in a happier and more sympathetic fashion than any on the current stage.

Eighth, Cooper and Smith. As interpreters of that type of life among Negroes that fosters the ambition to be "sports" the versatile song writer and the comedian are rigidly truthful.

Ninth, Fiddler and Shelton. This is the best of all the colored Chinese acts. Harry Fiddler is the happiest portrayer of the "chop suey" of Oriental in our race.

Tenth, Blondy Robinson. In eccentric comedy no performer save Allie Gillam can equal Robinson. His twists and jerks are excellent specimens of eccentric dancing.

There were several acts that approached these in quality but their standard was cheapened by a display of the suggestive. In one or two acts a performer would reveal himself as out of the ordinary, but would be hampered by poor support. Often a poorly constructed sketch would ruin the value of even those in the stellar ranks.

The past year has shown a decided advance in the opportunities for suggestive work largely due to either ignorant managers or white owners, who are merely exploiting the race for money. Many charming vocalists and instrumentalists have been added to the stage this year and several of the lesser but more popular performers have gone into cabaret.

Will Vaudeville Endure? Today it is the most popular branch of all Negro theatricals; but unless a keen prying knife is used, vaudeville will do more to ruin the Negro stage than even the cabaret. The middleman is more at fault than either the performers or the audience. It is true the brazenly suggestive stuff offered by the cheap type of actor will receive rowdy applause but a careful observer will soon discover that there are only a baker's dozen using that method. The middleman usually cares for nothing save such sensationalism that will attract a crowd to the box office, or if he is supplying white houses he nurses a desire to force a lower standard upon his colored contingent.

THE REAL AND FALSE.

The New York American Ledger 3/27/15
An incident occurred at the Lafayette Theatre Monday afternoon showing how widely divergent are the views of our colored and white citizens on the question of the colored American's mannerisms—how he generally acts and conducts himself to-day in real life. That an educational campaign must be inaugurated to erase false notions from the minds of those who think they do but know us not is painfully evident and this mental emancipation should commence as soon as possible.

On the bill at the Lafayette Theatre Monday was a white female performer who for fifteen years has played on the big time doing a single turn. She is known in theatrical parlance as "a coon shouter," and she makes up as a colored woman of the tantalizing brown variety.

ne years ago, about the time May
arwin and other white artists were in
the limelight as "coon song shouters,"
this singer in question was a big hit in
vaudeville—usually a veritable riot wher-
ever she appeared. She is the possessor
of a good singing voice and showed
such skill in making up that when, at
the end of her turn, she disclosed her
true racial identity, she gave her audi-
ence (that is, the white patrons) a pleas-
ant surprise.

So after nearly sixteen years showing
white people how colored people sing
this variety artist was given an oppor-
tunity Monday afternoon to let the col-
ored folk see how they chirped "coon
songs" and those of the ragtime brand.
But the efforts of the lady fair under
a coat of tan was not convincing, and
some of the disorderly patrons in the
audience showed their disapproval by
hissing. It was obvious that many
promptly realized in the beginning that
they were not listening to the real thing.

When the management approached the
singer after her appearance and sug-
gested that she make a few changes in
her act she became indignant, declaring
that for sixteen years she had worked in
the best vaudeville houses in the country
and no manager had made suggestions
to her before. She could not under-
stand why she should be told anything
about her act at this late day.

When reminded that she was working
before a colored audience and that she
should not overdraw her character and
make herself objectionable to the patrons
of the house she exclaimed that she
knew how colored people acted and she
did not need to be given lessons on that
subject. It is not necessary to relate
that the engagement of this singer at
the Lafayette Theatre was short-lived.

It is extremely unfortunate that the
stage, in its characterization of the col-
ored American, is doing us more harm
than good. But the public is not to
blame for present-day conditions. The
guilty parties are the theatre manager
and the booking agent. They have been
mainly responsible for the rarity of the
colored performer on the big time in re-
cent years, and it is due to their lack
of knowledge of the colored man that
there are thrust upon the public false
types that ridicule and degrade.

Theatregoers like colored acts and
usually enjoy them immensely. Know-
ing this, the manager and booking agent
have invaded the footlights with white
performers under cork and those who

prefer to brown up. So to-day we have
as many colored acts in vaudeville on
the big time as ever, only they are put
on by white people who try to imitate
colored people. One can readily see to
what a great disadvantage the colored
performer is placed. He cannot whiten
up and imitate a white performer, but
the latter can darken up and do a black-
face turn.

The manager and booking agent are
also largely responsible for so many
rough black-face acts done by colored
performers. A few days ago I asked a
young colored woman who is attractive
and dainty in appearance, and whose
work is refined, why she selected a male
partner who looked up, who wore loud,
ludicrous clothes and whose comedy-
making methods were coarse. In fact,
the male partner is the antithesis of the
female artist.

I was informed by the young woman
that the booking agents had advised her
to get a partner—a big black fellow who
looked funny and who cut monkey-
shines and made the people laugh. This
is the same advice white performers
who work under cork receive, and their
endeavors to excite one's risibilities nine
cases out of ten become so overdrawn
that they become offensive—at least to
the colored citizen. It requires a white
performer of some mentality as well as
knowledge of the colored man to give
a good imitation without ridiculing the
race.

It is not to theatres conducted and
mainly patronized by white people that
we must look for the campaign to be
started against objectionable Negro
stage types. It is to theatres conducted
by and mainly patronized by colored
people. False ideas and false stage
types should never have precedence over
truth—over the real thing—and the seed
of truth must first be planted and nour-

ished in Negro institutions. Then they
will eventually spread and take root
where the soil at this time is less
friendly and less fertile, and where its
growth would be greatly injured by the
weeds of misrepresentation and igno-
rance now growing wild.

THE NEGRO RENAISSANCE

(BY LESTER A. WALTON.)

IS the "Negro renaissance," so far
relating to the American stage,
hand? Well, it looks very much that
way, for one may find on every hand
some cheering evidence that the colored
entertainer is being more eagerly sought
after to-day than for years. There is

something in the air that impresses one
that colored performers, colored song-
writers and colored musical shows are
coming into their own, and a spirit of
optimism pervades colored theatrical
circles that has been missing since the
days of Williams & Walker.

Colored musical shows have been a
drug on the market, but this season is
destined to see more shows and better
shows than have graced the boards for
many seasons. Local colored theatre-
goers made it apparent in no uncertain
manner last week that the public is once
more hungry for colored musical pro-
ductions when the Smart Set Company
played to enormous audiences at the
Lafayette Theatre. With the Smart Set
presenting the best show of its career
and the people craving for a colored
attraction, the big business done by the
Whitney aggregation was not a bit sur-
prising.

Unusual interest is being manifested
by both colored and white theatregoers
in the Miller & Lyles Company, which
is soon to open in a musical production
entitled "Darkydom." Even the Broad-
way managers are evincing no little con-
cern, for there is every reason to be-
lieve that "Darkydom" will be a sensa-
tion on Broadway before many weeks
have passed. Will Marion Cook, the
race's foremost composer, is working
day and night getting the musical num-
bers in shape, while Jesse A. Shipp is
equally as industrious staging the pro-
duction. James Reese Europe is ren-
dering Mr. Cook valuable aid along
musical lines, while Will A. Cooke and
Henry Creamer (the latter wrote the
lyrics to the show) are able lieutenants
to Jesse A. Shipp.

Not since the days of Williams &
Walker has there been collected together
such an array of songsters, and the
management of the show appears to be
justified in advertising the chorus as
"The greatest singing chorus in Amer-
ica." Furthermore, there will be pretty
girls galore.

Miller & Lyles will be materially as-
sisted in the comedy end by Allie Gillam
and Will A. Cooke, while Henry Troy,
who wrote the lines to the show, Fannie
Wise, Thompson, Cooper & Thompson
and Ida Forsythe will be among the
well-known performers to appear in
musical numbers, many of which have
been written with a view to awakening
in America a higher appreciation of
Negro music.

Another indication that better times
are in store for the colored performer
is that in many of this season's burlesque

shows colored people are being used.
"Jolly John" Larkins is an added at-
traction in one company, and colored
men and women are being used in a
number of others.

At the Century Theatre, which opened
last week under the direction of Ned
Wayburn in "Town Topics," one of the
features of the show being a chorus of
one hundred, a large orchestra com-
posed of colored musicians, under the
direction of Will Vodery, is employed,
while Alex Rogers and C. Lucky Rob-
erts have attracted the attention of the
song-writing world by writing an un-
usual song for Nora Bayes, a headliner
on the big time, entitled "The Robin and
the Red, Red Rose," which is charac-
terized as a classic by those who ought
to know. The song is not of the rag-
time variety with which colored com-
posers are usually identified, and is so
highly regarded by Nora Bayes that be-
fore singing it she briefly tells the audi-
ence a few facts concerning the number.
R. C. McPherson and Chris Smith are
writing the musical numbers for Marie
Cahill, and they feel confident that in
this "Negro renaissance" they will write
some numbers that will reflect credit on
all concerned.



HENRY TROY
One of the Principal Soloists in Mil-
ler & Lyles' New Show,
"Darkydom."
**Zeigfeld Employs Colored
Orchestra.**
Special to the Globe.
New York City, Jan. 15—Florenz
Zeigfeld, famous for his production
of the Follies from year to year, has
shown his appreciation of the ability

of the colored musician by employ-
ing fourteen colored men to play the
entire score for the Midnight Frolics,
on the roof of the New Amsterdam
Theatre. For several months, eight
men, under the leadership of Ford
T. Dabney, have been playing there
for the public dancing, and the way
in which these men worked proved
to be an attraction to the roof. Dab-
ney has been under the watchful
eye of Mr. Ziegfeld for many years
and the latter now shows his confi-
dence by opening that particular
door of opportunity which for the
first time in history has even been
opened to the colored man. Never
before has an orchestra of our race
played for a production running on
Broadway. Full charge of all the
music for the Danse de Folies has
been placed in Dabney's hands, in-
cluding the white orchestra which
alternates.

Ford T. Dabney is thirty-one years
old. He was born in Washington
and received all of his musical edu-
cation there. About 1904, he came
to New York for a while, later going
to Haiti as pianist for the Haytian
President, Nord Alexis. After a stay
of three years in Haiti, he returned
to New York. After marrying he
lived in Baltimore for a while, and
last fall a year ago, returned to
New York. In conjunction with
James Reese Europe and William H.
Tyers, he organized the Tempo Club
and is vice-president of same.

On the program of the Midnight
Frolics, it is noted that the music is
by Dabney's Syncopated Orchestra.

After the first night's production,
Ziegfeld, Gene Buck, who wrote the
show; New Weyburn, the producer,
and George T. Nichols, musical di-
rector of all of Ziegfeld's productions,
came forward and congratulated the
orchestra. Nichols claimed that he
had never conducted a better first
night.

NEGRO TENT MINSTREL.
Special to The Advertiser.
GADSDEN, ALA., March 4.—More
than a hundred Northern negroes are
being assembled here for the organi-
zation of a colored minstrel show un-
der the direction of C. W. Parks, Sr.
The show will take to the road under
canvas on March 15. The show will ac-
commodate 2,500 people.
The show is said to be the largest
in the United States with a negro
performers. Some of the negroes have
been educated in Boston and New
York and have reputations as acro-
bats and actors. The show will tour
the South.

Theatrical—1915

Individual Troupes. By GEORGE H. N. JONES

SHORT YEARS BACK THE STAGE OFFERED MIGHTY GOOD things to the colored performer. The act that could do anything at all, that was worth while, experienced comparatively little trouble. It was booked over the big circuits from twenty to forty weeks at a clip. At the end of such a season no inconsiderable number of our colored brethren in the profession with saving tendencies found themselves in possession of a good sized bank roll. Good old days were these; a veritable golden age for the act that had the goods—the act that had new and distinctively original ways of doing things, the act that had ideas. And nearly all of them had. The present day tendency to steal and plagiarize from other acts had not come into such universal vogue. Colored actors really worked then—hustled all the time to dig up new ideas and perfect them. They tried to be different from all others, took pride in being acclaimed so and succeeded admirably as a whole. Originality was the rule and not the exception.

NOWADAYS THE REVERSE IS THE CASE. THE COLORED ACT distinctively original is not only an exception but a genuine rarity. The general average of merit of present day performers has slumped fearfully from the standard of yore. There is only one reason assignable and that is laziness—genuine laziness. This trait is not characteristic of the few, but the many. To use a slang expression, they "lay down on the job." They're too lazy to dig up new ideas. This would require mental exertion on their part. So they wait until an exceptional act gets good, new ideas that go big and then steal them in part or entirety. Some haven't the nerve and grit to try out a brand new idea when they get one on their own hook. They're not actors but merely poor imitations of other acts—pirates and pilferers of the stage. There's a bunch of them, too. You couldn't throw a brick without hitting a dozen. Mora! cowardice is their one failing in common. Take any of them to task and any and all will claim that these ideas were original with them. Somebody's lying, but often it's hard to tell just who.

THESE LAZY COLORED ACTORS HURT THE WHOLE PROFESSION and discourage those in it that are really trying to deliver the goods in original packages. They discourage those that use new material by stealing it, for stuff soon becomes stale when a score of teams are peddling it out at the same time. All the fellow that originated the ideas can do, under the circumstances, is to throw up his hands and ask, "What's the use?" Can one blame him for lapsing into indifference as to his own work when knowing full well that were he to go to special efforts to get something else new a score of teams would be hovering around like hawks to snatch his morsel from him before he has more than even sampled it himself?

THE INDUCEMENTS TO DIG UP IDEAS ARE NONE TOO GREAT and will not be until the lazy, unscrupulous actors are barred by some effective means from stealing another's stuff. They're a disgrace to themselves and to the others a dead weight. Parasites and nothing more.

THE QUESTION ARISES HOW TO FRUSTRATE THIS DESPICABLE class and put a premium on the hustling bunch that really try to earn their money with their own ideas. My suggestion is that managers of houses unite and absolutely refuse to play an act that is known to be a steal from another. Then the lazy bunch will be forced to think or starve. The sooner the better, for the actors that take their profession as a serious and honorable one and give the public a look-in for their money. The lazy man and the man that pilfers is not tolerated in society. Why should he be on the stage?

STEALING ANOTHER MAN'S IDEAS IS ONLY STEALING IN A lesser degree than the man that steals jewelry or money.

The Smashing Triumph of 1915

THE TEMPO CLUB

IN

THE VERNAL FETE

AT

Manhattan Casino

Thursday, April 22, 1915

Tickets Selling in Advance at 119 West 136th Street, Phone 441 Audubon

MERIT, NOT COLOR, WON.

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

UPON the pugilistic horizon a new heavyweight champion has appeared with great suddenness in the person of Jess Willard, an ex-cowboy, hailing from the State of Kansas, who, after twenty-six rounds of hard fighting, wrested the title from Jack Johnson at Havana, Cuba, last Monday before a large crowd.

As a member of a race regarded in this country as inferior, because of the color of its skin, although bearing the "made in America" brand, I take this opportunity to congratulate Jess Willard on his victory, which I think was well earned and honestly earned, and my sincere wish is that he retains the title as long as he shows sufficient prowess and generalship in the ring to keep it by fair means.

I am a colored man (one who has grown to know that there is no premium on the color of a man's skin) and I would be handling the truth carelessly were I to state that I was not greatly surprised and disappointed when the news was imparted to me that Johnson had lost to Willard. I was shocked beyond measure, and my mentality was in such a chaotic state for a few seconds that I thought I would emulate Johnson's actions of "taking the count." But the information I received did not make me feel mean and vicious in my attitude toward Willard or the members of the white race. Hatred did not enter my heart against the Caucasian. I felt sorry—extremely sorry—that Johnson, a colored man, had lost the championship

title to a white man; but believing in the survival of the fittest, whether he be black or white, I made the statement that I was glad the better man had won.

I am glad to be able to say to the world that my attitude—to give credit where credit is due, irrespective of color—was likewise shown by the majority of colored Americans throughout America. Colored people "pulled" for Johnson to win, believing him to be the better man, and they were also animated naturally by the spirit of race consciousness the same as would have been an Irishman, a Jew or an Italian. But deep down in their hearts there is no rancor, and it gives me great pleasure to state they have not been parties to race riots such as disgraced this country after the Johnson-Jeffries fight. There was no need for the police stationed in pairs at every corner in Harlem Monday night, as the colored man is a game sport and a good loser.

I cannot help recall the attitude of many of our white citizens after the Johnson-Jeffries fight, which was in great contrast to that of the colored people of Monday and Tuesday. I remember with much vividness how the late "Bob" Cole and I, returning from a trip to the Catskills, boarded a car for Harlem and were scowled at and insulted by white men in the car, of how the passengers refused to sit near us and the ungentlemanly language used by some in referring to the new champion.

In many States of this country the Statute books reek with cruel laws, many of them unconstitutional, which were enacted as the result of the Johnson-

Jeffries fight. The colored man, unfortunately, has very little influence in the legislative halls of this country, but if he had you would not find him going about with a sour stomach and a bad taste in his mouth, ready and willing to vent his spleen on millions of loyal citizens by passing unjust laws, merely because a white man defeated a black man in the ring for the world's championship title.

It is extremely unfortunate that the question of color should enter into a prize fight in which one contestant is white and the other colored, save in an incidental way, the same as when horses of different colors compete on the race course. The average white man does not seem to realize that he is the one who is principally responsible for raising all the serious color questions and is fomenting an unfriendly feeling between the races. And the daily press has much to do with stirring up strife—a practice which, if continued, will result in dire consequences.

In commenting editorially on "The Battle of Havana," the New York Sun, a very conservative paper starts out: "Once more the Caucasian race can hold up its head," while other publications more radical gleefully tell of "the white race coming into its own." Southerners are reported as being joyful because, to their minds, the defeat of Johnson removes "a stigma" under which the Caucasian has been living with heart bowed down and in ignominy for over 5 years. Such rot!

Colored people are learning much through oppression and persecution, and to their fund of information they should add this one truism: That no race—white or black—has a lease for life or for even a long duration on the championship heavyweight title or anything else. There is no such thing as the "supremacy of white skin." Johnson lost, not because he was black, but because Father Time and improper living had put him out of the running. Willard won, not because his face was white, but because he was a younger man and possessed more stamina than his adversary.

I now expect to see Willard draw the color line, as such conduct will be in order and consistent with the average white American's idea of fairness. Already I read from the pen of R. L. Goldberg of the Mail, up to a few days ago a very fair and impartial scribe, the

following:

The public has learned that the presence of a colored man at the top of the heavyweight class can in no way help stimulate the game. No black man will figure seriously in the heavyweight game until one comes along who, like Johnson, by the force of his ability alone, makes it impossible for the title holder to ignore him.

It is interesting to look over the heavyweight field and try to picture which one of the hopefuls should be given first chance at the title after Willard has skimmed off the cream and made himself comfortable for life.

Of course the man who stands out as the hardest hitter of the lot cannot be considered. Sam Langford's great misfortune is his color. He has less chance now to horn in among the whites than ever before.

The next colored man to win the champion heavyweight title will accomplish this feat in some foreign land, when he will defeat a foreigner who has acquired the honors. I do not expect the white fighters and writers of this country to make it possible for any colored American to become champion. Strange about many white Americans—they would much prefer to have a foreigner champion of the world, if a white man, than a colored American. It is not so in other countries where merit, not color, is given most serious consideration.

The claim is made that Jack Johnson did not add dignity to his position while champion, owing to the unpleasant notoriety he received. I assert, and without fear of contradiction, that Jack Johnson was persecuted with more zest and persistency than any fighter that ever lived. Maligned by the public, misrepresented by the press and even persecuted by the United States Government, it would have been impossible for Johnson to have borne a reputation for peace and quietude. Shortly after he knocked out Jeffries every other police officer, to get into the limelight, took pleasure in arresting Johnson for speeding. Even a white citizen down in Mississippi will admit that the charge of white slavery instituted against the colored fighter was superlatively technical, and that there are thousands of men to-day who should be in jail to-day if Johnson belongs behind the bars for violating the Mann act.

Jess Willard will not be subjected to this severe and barbaric treatment. He is a white man, and because of such will be permitted to exceed the speed limit at will. If he knocks down and kills a few people he will get out of it, especially if his victims are colored. He will be at liberty to do whatever he wills and as the "Moses of the white race"

virtues will be extolled and his faults, if any are admitted, will be covered up by the public, press and government officials.

Jack Johnson has grown in popularity with the white public since Monday. He has lost the championship. Now the United States Government will not bother itself about prosecuting him further. Very likely the case will be dropped. Were he to return to America he could exceed the speed limit as much as he desired and would not be molested. And so kindly disposed are the white citizens toward him now that nothing would be said were he to go to Utah and take unto himself many wives.

It will be interesting to observe the position taken by daily newspapers in the future on the subject of "Prize fights." Branded as brutal and low by such papers as the New York Journal, I now expect to see them do a chameleon stunt. Furthermore, I would not be surprised to see the mayors of the various cities change their minds about the exhibition of moving pictures showing a colored and a white man fighting. In fact, in this great land of "justice" and "fair play" I expect to see many laws and rulings since Johnson defeated Jeffries thrown into the ash heap and new ones substituted to fit the occasion. Now, as to the details of the fight between Johnson and Willard, the daily press has minutely described each round, now Johnson up to a few rounds being at advantage over his younger and less skilled adversary. Some continue to tell a lie. In Harlem many of Johnson's admirers base their contention that the fight was fixed on the fact that Barron D. Wilkins, an intimate friend of Johnson, failed to receive a message five times asking for advice how to bet, but did not receive one word, although on previous occasions Barron received word from the ringside. Another rumor has it that a big New York florist, after betting \$20,000 on Johnson to win, took his money down upon receiving information from some strange source that Johnson had lost the fight to Willard. It is my candid belief that Johnson honestly lost the fight to Willard. I am not, like many of our white friends, so completely inoculated with race hatred that I have become void of all reason or spirit of fair play. In this life men oftentimes succeed by being underrated and fail by being overrated. Johnson underrated Willard. He trained barely three weeks for the contest and held his man

too cheaply. In my opinion Johnson did all in his power to knock out Willard, and figured on administering the sleep wallop about the tenth round. But the Kansan, with youth and endurance on his side (not because of his color) managed to stand the champion's well-intended punches and tired Johnson out by allowing his opponent to batter him about the ring. Then Johnson, all in from exertion, was eased the fatal right to the jaw, and then—curtain!

Johnson, in a manly statement, has declared that he did his level best to whip Willard, and I believe him. I would rather regard him as an ex-champion—a man of integrity and principle—than one who, although a better man than Willard, had sold out for a financial consideration. Although the prevalent belief exists in this country that the caliber of a man is determined by the color of his skin, those of education and culture and who are real Christians, not hypocrites, know that CHARACTER, after all, counts most. And while the private life of Jack Johnson, into which the public has seen fit to incessantly pry, has not made him friends, he has always enjoyed the reputation of being on the level in the prize ring.

I do not regard the defeat of Jack Johnson by Jess Willard as a calamity to the Negro, but merely an incident. If the white citizens view it as an event of great significance, let them be happy in the thought, and perhaps in their jubilant frame of mind they will treat the colored brother with more fairness and go about with less envy and race hatred. For, even at this hour, though they be happy, I am more concerned over the thought that thousands of people are being killed in a cruel, useless, uncalled-for war in Europe, and that thousands are being made widows and orphans, than in the fact that Johnson lost the championship title to Willard. For although the dead and dying on the battlefield are mostly white, they belong to the human family.

Again I extend hearty congratulations to Jess Willard, the new champion heavyweight of the world, and I trust he will act the part of a champion in all matters pertaining to the question of his defense of the title.

S. H. DUDLEY WRITES

(BY LESTER A. WALTON.)

A last colored theatrical manager—those who conduct theatres whose patronage is wholly or largely colored—are awakening to the fact that it is absolutely necessary that

they organize for their mutual protection, and that by co-operation they can best advance the interests of the colored theatrical profession. It would not be surprising if an organization was formed among them in the near future, one which would bring about revolutionary changes in the uncertain booking system now in vogue.

The breaking of contracts by Tim Moore and the acts of irresponsibility of other performers are making it clear to the managers that something must be done to make some vaudevillians understand full well that a contract is a contract. Several managers have written commendatory letters to THE AGE on it, stand against contract-breakers and advising that managers get together.

One of those to urge that managers organize with a view to bettering conditions is S. H. Dudley, well-known comedian and head of the Dudley Circuit, who writes as follows:

Washington, D.C., Aug. 23.

To the Dramatic Editor of The Age:

I have just read the article in The Age about contract jumpers, and I quite agree with you; but the managers are as much to blame as the contract jumpers, for I find it almost an impossibility to get managers of colored theatres to cooperate and stick together. What we need is all of the good big houses paying fairly decent salaries to start the ball rolling—organize a protective association—and the smaller houses will soon fall in line when they see the advantage of so doing.

Now I do not mean to organize to cut salaries of the performers, nor do I mean to do anything to work against them; but I want to organize to keep performers from working against the managers in the matter of signing contracts and then breaking them whenever they feel so disposed.

Here is a little of my experience along the lines of booking agent and manager: I have booked acts and given them from four to six weeks' work. They would sign and return the contracts in good faith; then some manager would offer them from \$5 to \$15 more for only one week's work and then the nearsighted actor would cancel my contracts as late as Saturday, prior to opening on Monday. I have also experienced considerable difficulty with acts playing houses under my contracts with other time to follow. The local manager likes the act and shows it wherein he can hold it over and it would, therefore, save railroad fares, etc. Then the act disappoints the manager of the other theatre where it is billed to open after the latter has gone to expense in billing the turn. Consequently, the Monday audience is disappointed, and in some instances the manager is accused of misrepresentation. The patrons expect the act billed to appear no matter how good the one substituted for it is. To the dismay of the manager he finds he is running a house down by not giving the

public what he advertised. All of this could be avoided by co-operation.

I could write enough to fill the entire dramatic page of The Age, but why use up so much valuable space on such an "insignificant" matter; that is, insignificant to some managers, many performers and to the majority of your readers. However, I sincerely hope and managers of colored theatres will get together and organize—organize for business and not for pleasure.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) S. H. DUDLEY.

Since receiving Mr. Dudley's letter the following telegram was sent me by Mrs. Bessie Oliver Miller, wife of one of the members of the well-known vaudeville team of Miller & Lyles, who is managing the Olivette Theatre, Louisville, Ky.:

Louisville, Ky., August 24.

To the Dramatic Editor of The Age:

— did not show up. Placed tickets last Thursday. He wired for money which I also placed. He never called for it. I advertised him strongly for two weeks. See if you can locate and land him for next week. Rumored he is to play opposition house here.

BESSIE OLIVER MILLER.

I have purposely omitted the name of this performer, who is one of the strongest drawing cards in colored houses. What more convincing argument that colored managers should organize could be found? The telegram from Bessie Oliver Miller strikingly represents present day conditions as experienced weekly by colored managers.

Contract-breaking and unreliable acts will continue just as long as managers remain disorganized. Conditions are chaotic and badly upset in the colored vaudeville world for the same reason that similar conditions exist in other avenues of endeavor among colored Americans—lack of organization. This is no time to worry over the "momentous" problem of who is to be elected president, secretary or treasurer of an association of managers; all such petty ambitions should be submerged and the spirit of ego that is so conspicuously apparent in all of us at times should be temporarily buried. For to accomplish the larger things in life men must work together, not apart. Furthermore, the offices of president, secretary or treasurer do not make you a bigger man in organization, unless you possess ability and other essentials. Whether you are in or out of office, you can make yourself a power if you are qualified and capable.

Now is the time for Managers Gibson Thomas, Turpin and others to act!

Theatrical - 1916

Individual Troupes.

"In Old Kentucky" Here Again

New York Times 12-13-16

"In Old Kentucky," T. Dazey's fascinating romance of the Southland, which has held audiences enthralled for the past twenty-two years, is announced as next week's offering at the Lexington Theatre, Lexington avenue and 51st street.

The characters in the drama are really old friends to many, many theatre-goers, who, season after season, anxiously await the next appearance of the play which was originally produced in 1893 at the Academy of Music and was for many years a regular visitor at that house and the American Theatre.

A most significant fact in connection with "In Old Kentucky," which it is estimated has been witnessed by more than 38,000,000 people and has aggregated profits in excess of \$3,000,000, is, that it is the one play the success of which is due solely and entirely to the colored actors who have appeared in it. Although the exciting horse race, "Madge's" daring swing across the chasm just in time to save her lover from death, the realistic fire scene and the timely rescue of "Queen Bess," Frank Layson's prize runner, and all the other features which are to-day as popular with the audience, it was not until the producers prevailed upon the author to permit them to introduce colored actors to sing, dance and perform on musical instruments as a brass band, in the barnyard scene in the second act and continuing throughout the remainder of the play, that the public really became interested in the production.

Some of our most noted white men of to-day recall with genuine pleasure the performance as witnessed by them from a gallery seat. With the company to be seen here next week

is the man who first led the pickaninny band when the pickaninnies became the predominant feature of the show. He is John M. Powell, the colored bandmaster. In his 25 years of association with the play, Powell estimates that he has led his band approximately 35,000 times in playing "Dixie." The band plays this piece at least once at every performance and always once in the public concerts given in front of the theatre.

A dancing contest is scheduled to take place on Friday night during the performance when the pickaninnies will compete with local dancers for prizes.

A NEGRO TRAGEDIAN.

(BY LUCIEN H. WHITE.)

The theatrical season of 1915-16 brought to the Negroes of this city a most ambitious attempt on the part of the Edward Sterling Wright Players, in the presentation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The work of the company has been reviewed at length in these columns. But their work in other cities was as noteworthy and created as much comment as in New York. Particularly was this true in Philadelphia. The Quaker City, while not his birthplace, appears to have been the stage of endeavor for Ira Aldridge, a great Negro tragedian who portrayed *Othello* in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Edward Sterling Wright's appearance in Philadelphia gave inspiration to "Penn," of the staff of the *Evening Bulletin*, that city, and he indulges in a reminiscent article anent the Aldridge achievements that makes most interesting reading. Because of its historical value, I am quoting it in part. Says "Penn" in his column of "Men and Things":

"There has come forward, at the fog end of the season, a little company of humble and unpretentious players who profess to be votaries of the Bard, although it may be necessary to say of them, as the dusky wooer from Morocco did of himself, when he approached to open the caskets in Portia's house at Belmont:

Mislike me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burnished sun."

"They are playing at the Walnut—a stage unsurpassed in America for its Shakespearean traditions; *Othello* is their 'vehicle,' as some of the critics would say, and in 1916, if Mr. Duffy's good man deliver shall be digging into the records to see how the theatres of Philadelphia were celebrating the tercentenary, he will at least discover how the black tragedians essayed *Othello* in the oldest playhouse in America, with Edward Sterling Wright portraying the dignity and the agonies of the jealous Moor.

"But it has been said this week that colored men and women ought not appear in this play. The thought seems to be that Shakespeare can be properly interpreted by white actors only and that the plays were not written with any possibility in view that they would be enacted by the players of another race. Doubtless it is difficult for most of his

tragedies and perhaps all of the romantic dramas or comedies to be performed by black actors without exciting a sense of the lugubrious in a white audience, although such an effect might not at all take place in a black one. Yet in the instance of *Othello* there would seem to be room at once for an exception. In the principal or heroic role the actor stands forth as the representative of a different nativity from that of the Venetians who surround him; Desdemona speaks of his visage as distinguished from his mind, and Brabantio of his "sooty bosom"; and some white actors such as John McCullough, Daniel Bandmann and Thomas W. Keene used to make-up the part with a distinctly Negro like color of the skin, while others—Edwin Booth and Rossi in particular, as I remember them—used a copper-like shade of complexion such as we usually associate with the ideal North American Indian. Salvini, the greatest of all actors in the role, imparted to his face a somewhat darker hue, and when he blazed with rage in the tremendous scene of the third act it was suggestive for the moment of the fury in the frenzied countenance of a magnificent African savage. But all of us have seen white actors as *Othello*, no matter what sort of a complexion they gave him, play the part so stupidly and rantingly that no colored players could have made us writhe in our seats more than they did.

The appearance of Wright at the Walnut is not the first occasion that has been marked by an American Negro's performance of the title role of *Othello*. In fact, a member of the race became famous for his performance as the Moor, and one Smith, who had been a Philadelphia barber, was his manager. This actor was Ira Aldridge, who was said to have been the descendant of a Senegambian chief of the eighteenth century, and whose father, having come from that country, received enough instruction here to become a minister. When the son was born was never exactly known; the time appears to have been not later than 1810, and not earlier than 1805, and his birth was either in Baltimore or in the vicinity of that city. There is a story, however, that he worked as a youth by the side of the huge Molyneux, who afterwards went over to England as a prize fighter and representative of his race to contest with Tom Cribb, the white champion of that day.

The facts about Aldridge's later life in this country and as to how he made his start on the stage are also obscure. When he grew to manhood he had the stature, presence and voice of a man of proportions and power, and he became influenced with an ambition to make a name for himself, although his father wanted him trained for the pulpit. It is probable, however, that he was much more interested in admiration for Edmund Kean than he was in the paternal counsels as to how he should shape his life, and that he went to England at the instance of Kean, who employed him as

a valet; and there is no doubt that Kean gave him encouragement. The great English actor, who had been adopted while in this country as the honorary chief of a tribe of Western Indians, was noted for his vagaries of conduct both on and off the stage, but he had none of the customary prejudice of whites on this side of the Atlantic against the Negro, and at the worst other Englishmen would not have regarded his liking for Aldridge as other than an interesting eccentricity.

Aldridge was probably not more than twenty-seven or less than twenty-two years of age when he made his appearance on the English stage, and from that time until his death, when he was not less than fifty-seven, he was known as an important and successful European actor. It is recorded that he played *Othello* at Covent Garden in London as early as 1832, and a picture which delineates him in that role at a later period indicates force, intelligence and impressiveness. Sheridan Knowles praised him; Charles Kean played *Iago* to his Moor; Mrs. Kendall, in her girlhood, was cast for a part in his company, and he married a white woman. It is said that when he was a boy in Baltimore he learned German from sailors of that country who had occasion to be at the shipyard where he first earned his livelihood, and it is possible that this knowledge may have served him well when he went to Germany. However this may be, his success in that country was marked. Medals and decorations were conferred upon him there, as also at various times in Austria, Sweden and Russia. Not a little of the interest which he inspired was seemingly due to curiosity because of his race, but much of it was a frank recognition of his talent. This, of not the highest rank, was serviceable in the class of roles which he undertook and which his audiences, often made up almost entirely of white men and women, applauded sincerely. *Othello* seems to have been his most successful character, but in *Ori-ooka*, in which an African chief and hero is portrayed, and which was therefore adaptable to his physical or racial peculiarities, he apparently made as much of a hit as Forrest's in *Metamora*. But there were roles in which it was necessary for Aldridge to make up as a white man. One of them was *Lear*, and so well, according to English writers of the time, would he conceal his color and his hair under the long white locks and the flowing beard of the old king that no one who did not know who he was would have supposed him to be a colored man.

There is a large and important town in Poland called Lodz. It was conspicuous in the news last year when the Germans made their advance into that part of Russia. It was in this town that Aldridge died and he was buried in 1868, while he was making a professional tour of Warsaw, Moscow and St. Petersburg. All the recognition that he had received in the course of thirty-five years had come from European

countries; he was virtually a self-imposed exile from the country of his birth, and it would seem that he had no desire to come back to it, although it was supposed, after the Civil War, that he might be prevailed upon to do so. He had believed that whatever the merit or ability he might show on the stage in the United States, he would be unable to make any headway because of the excitement and bitterness over the slavery question; that Southerners would take the ground that it would be folly to let a member of the black race feel that he had talent that might be compared to that of some white actors, and that he might be the cause of such disturbances as culminated in the anti-English and pro-Forrest riots against Macready. But to-day, so far as Edward Stirling Wright and his comrades at the Walnut are concerned, there is something like a disposition to be fair to them, and I am told that on the opening night there were as many whites as blacks in the audience.

Possibly there may yet prove to be among them another "black Roscius" like Ira Aldridge.

PENN.
NEGRO LEWIS—THE GREAT CIRCUS RIDER—A STORY OF THE SAWDUST ARENA.
(By Harry Barnet) 2/20/14

A history of the circus has never been written. Perhaps the chronicle of that institution most peculiarly American will some day appear in black and white, but it is hardly probable. Circus people are notoriously slow to make talk of what goes on behind the glitter and noise. However, if ever a truthful narrative of what lies behind the massive tented amusement enterprises of our time emerges from tradition into books a figure oddly prominent will be that of a colored man, Negro Lewis.

A glimpse at the romantic career of Lewis came a few days ago in the smoking room of a Pullman attached to an Alabama Great Southern train, bound for New Orleans. Now in and about the smoking rooms of Pullmans hovers a quaint little Sprite of the Rails. It frolics fantastically with the tongues of men, setting them to wagging, and passing interesting intimacies from one to another after the manner of a pack of gossiping old women. In this fashion many a good yarn has been born, commenced its journeys from Peter to Paul, tarried a while with the womenfolk of their households, then gone forward upon its cheery mission unto their brethren, and the females of their brethren.

So it came to pass upon this day. The wheels purred their glide song, sans crescendo, and without diminuendo. In the corner nearest the window sat a smallish man, the last person in the world one would take to have been a circus owner for nearly fifty years. While the others in the room had discussed preparedness and politics and prohibition he sat mute.

At Collinsville, Ala., a small wagon

show was spread out along the tracks. A happy group of Negro workmen were preparing the wagons for parade. "I thought," said the coffee salesman, "that the days of the wagon cir-

cus were over, but I guess they're not," and he branished his cigar toward the array on the circus lot.

"The day has passed," volunteered the smallish man, "when a big show can make a lot of money. Times have changed, and so has the circus. Motion pictures and automobiles and electric railroads, it is not strange to say, have played havoc with them. So the shows are being made smaller. People are hunting among the rags and speckled bones of the old-time wagons shows, and reassembling them in their former gaudy gorgeousness—the result is, we're having a lot of small shows touring the country, resuming their romantic wanderings along moonlit pikes in the early morning hours, as in the old days."

"I didn't know that," said the man with the brier pipe.

"It's the truth," responded the smallish man. "But no matter how they're bedecked, the wagon shows of the future will never be the wagon shows as they were when I was a boy. The circus was an institution then, and I know, for I was nearly born under a circus tent, and have never lived any other place."

"Down South here, the Negroes enjoyed circus day more than any other, I guess," ventured the coffee salesman.

"Everybody did; human nature is alike under the skin," the smallish man said. "The Negro has always been connected in some capacity with the American circus—as much a part of it as the tents and wagons."

"Always as workmen, I suppose?" the man with the brier pipe asked.

"Usually," was the reply, "except two—really one American. When circus history is finally written the Negro will have a place in it, and one Negro especially. He was one of the finest bareback riders the circus world ever knew. And, oddly enough, he was in his prime at about the time the old-fashioned wagon show began to transform into the railroad show."

Followed then the story:

In the United States and abroad this rider was known as "Negro Lewis." He had no other name. During the War, when I left the circus and was an officer in the United States Navy under Admiral Porter, I picked Lewis up off Island 63. We were down there searching for Negroes to fill the Negro regiments. When a man up North was drafted, and didn't want to go into the Army, he would pay so much for a substitute, and these Negroes would be substitutes. They were put in the Negro regiments and the men who were drafted were given the credit.

We were steaming up and down the

Mississippi, and the guerrillas got so bad they would fire into our boats, and kill a lot of men. Admiral Porter concluded that about the best way to put a stop to that practice was to issue a proclamation that whenever one of his boats was fired into by guerrillas, or civilians, the buildings on the nearest plantation would be burned.

We were fired one day, and went ashore to make the proclamation good. It was always a rule that when we went ashore an officer from each mess took his steward, and went along. They took bags and boxes to gather up what they could of produce, chickens, pigeons and things of that kind, and took them abroad for their mess.

When we landed this day to burn the buildings we found a nice old lady in charge. She was all alone with the exception of the children. The men were off at war. A few weeks before, after the battle of Arkansas Post, we were up in the White River at Duvall's Bluffs. There had been a hospital there for Confederate soldiers, but they had all gotten away before we got there. The Confederate Government had a lot of money there in the postoffice, and we took it. There were thousands of dollars in paper money, and the commonest things we found were five hundred and thousand dollar bills. When the money was brought aboard we divided it among ourselves in amounts according to our ranks. I think it got something like two thousand dollars as my share. When we went ashore we always carried this money with us to pay for the things we took.

This day we went around with the old lady, and anything we took we would note the item on a piece of paper. When I got done I put a price on each item of something like twenty-five or thirty-five dollars for a chicken, and ten or twenty dollars for a bushel of sweet potatoes. Anyhow, I got all my servants could carry, and I think my bill was something between twenty and thirty thousand dollars. I pulled this Confederate money out to pay the bill, and the old lady commenced to plead for silver or gold, or United States money. But Confederate money was the only kind I had, and she had to be satisfied with it.

While we were gathering up this stuff some of the marines found an old ox over in the barnyard. They had been trying to shoot him, and when we told him to run out and jump I got there I took a musket from a marine and tried it, but none of us could do any good. We rested them on stumps, we rested it on strong rails, and we rested it on logs, but there wasn't one of us could hit him. We were trying to shoot him in the head, but we couldn't hit him any place. I often thought since how foolish the enemy were to be afraid of us; they never would be hit if we had to do it.

On our way back to the boats, I am glad to say the plantation houses were not burned. I think it happened because there were no men around, just the women and the children. But the Negro cabins were set on fire, and the Negroes taken on board the boats.

On my way down through the plantation about the time my boat was ready to leave I happened to look into a cabin which was partially burned, and threatening to collapse every minute. I saw a small colored boy lying in the ashes in the fire-place, fast asleep. He had nothing on but a cotton bag with a couple of holes cut in it for his arms to go through, and one for his head. He was probably about three years old.

I didn't want him to be burned, so I took him by the arms, and shook him to make him get up. It took me quite a little while to waken him, and after getting him on his feet I had to hurry to get out of the blazing cabin. When I got out the little fellow was following me, and he went all the way to the boat. I took him abroad, and there was some argument about me taking him along, as he was too small to be enlisted. No one seemed to care anything about him, so I said I would take care of him. I didn't want to see him left there on the bank of the river, nor put back in one of the huts to be burned, so I took him with me.

When I left the Navy, and returned to my father's circus, I took the boy with me, and he became my servant. Several years later, when we were wintering on the circus farm up North, I had him help decorate the horses, and help in any way he could. I had a little Shetland pony I was training for a little white boy to ride. One day the white boy didn't show up, so I wanted Lewis to run out in the training ring and jump up on the pony. But on the start, do everything I could, by punishment and fear, pleading and jollyng, postively I couldn't get that boy to run. He didn't know how to run, and apparently I couldn't teach him. He was the most awkward thing I ever saw.

I talked the thing over with some of the performers in the training barn, and we called Lewis to us. We told him to stoop down and take off his shoes, and we gave him a pair of old ox over in the barnyard. They had pumps to put on. When he got them on we told him to run out and jump I got there I took a musket from a marine and tried it, but none of us could do any good. We rested them on stumps, we rested it on strong rails, and we rested it on logs, but there wasn't one of us could hit him. We were trying to shoot him in the head, but we couldn't hit him any place. I often thought since how foolish the enemy were to be afraid of us; they never would be hit if we had to do it.

Well, we started the pony off and started the boy off, and, by Jove, he went out with that pony like a deer, and grabbed the surcingle. Sure enough, he went clear over the pony,

and landed on the outside of the ring, gave one bump, and into the side of the training barn. After that we tried for five or six hours to get him to run again, but he wouldn't, unless he had the pumps on. He believed there were springs in them. Of course, there were not. But they gave him confidence, and his start at riding. Afterwards he became one of the greatest and most famous riders in this country.

Lewis and one other colored boy were the only Negro riders ever known in this country. The other boy was raised in Cuba. He was brought in slave times by Sharena. Sharena also had the boy's sister, who was a very great rider, and known as Cabanas. Whatever became of that boy I don't know.

Lewis stayed with me for ten or twelve years, when other circus proprietors began to find out what a great drawing card he was. They commenced to swell his head by making him offers, until, eventually, they succeeded in getting him away from me.

After leaving me, he went to Europe and rode in the biggest circuses there. He was gone several years, and during that time a very rich and beautiful Hungarian woman, a baroness fell in love with him, and followed him all over the Continent. But Lewis displayed his character. He remained true to his wife, who was a minister's daughter living in Zanesville, Ohio. Almost anybody else, and especially Lewis, under the circumstances, you would think would have lost his head, but you have to give him credit that he didn't.

At one time Lewis was ten or fifteen thousand dollars to the good, had several fine ring horses, and every circus in Europe wanted him. But he dissipated in other ways, and got rid of his wealth and his health. He finally came back to the United States and I found him a perfect wreck, not a dollar to his name, and in the last stages of consumption. I, of course, felt a little sore at him for leaving me as he did, when he should have stuck to me through life. At the same time I couldn't go back on him. I got him some warm clothes, paid his fare to Zanesville, so he could be with wife and children, and within a few days after he got there he died. orable, but he couldn't stand prosperity.

100,000 NEGROES READY TO FIGHT.

The following Associated Press dispatch was published throughout the country last week:

Tuskegee, Alabama, June 22—When informed by an Associated Press representative today of the killing of 12 Negro soldiers, Emmett J. Scott Secretary of the Tuskegee Institute, called attention to the fact that eighteen years ago when war was declared with Spain that the late

Booker T. Washington, principal of Tuskegee Institute, called upon the Negro people of the United States, and particularly upon Tuskegee graduates and former students, to volunteer for service in defence of their country. Hundreds of Negroes followed this advice. Secretary Scott states that there are a dozen or more Tuskegee graduates and former students in Mexico now as members of the various colored regiments. "Negroes," he states, "will rally to the defence of their country now as they have always done. As the first American soldier to lose his life in Mexico, March 24 of this year, was a Negro, so the first man killed in the Revolutionary War was a Negro. The Negro people take pride in the fact that it was the charge of Negro troops at San Juan Hill in the Spanish American war that turned the tide there, and that Negroes have fought bravely in every in which this country has engaged. The Negro was with Jackson at New Orleans, with Perry on Lake Erie, and 180,000 Negro soldiers served in the Civil war."

"The Negroes of this country," he states, "will be no less patriotic at this time than in former periods of stress and storm. The Negro possesses a patriotism that rises above injustices and wrongs. He is American through and through. The President will find no hyphenates among us. The Negro has never faltered in defense of his country; he will not falter now. If President Wilson desires to employ sturdy Negroes to defend the flag, he can be assured that a hundred thousand and more are at his disposal."

LOUISVILLE
AUG 7 1910

A PLAY OF NEGRO LIFE.

A New York theatrical manager has arranged to produce a play in which all the characters are negroes. No name yet has been selected for it. The scenes are laid in New York and in the South. No attempt is made to make a burlesque out of the story. The play tells a tale of negroes in a dignified manner.

The cast will include several leading actors and all will use burnt cork. The play is meant to show a page from life as lived by negroes, in a way probably that the average white person knows nothing of in reality.

SUN 7/10/10
New York City

The success of the negro actors at the Lafayette Theatre was so great that three cities are to have similar organizations next season. One of these will be Washington, another New York, while a third will be Philadelphia. It is possible that there may also be such an organization in Boston. It is A. C. Winn who organizes and trains these negro actors.

Theatrical - 1916

Individual Troupes

Tribune Praises Colored Actors

The New York Times
4/2/16

(From the N. Y. Tribune.)

The immortal Bard of Avon would have been considerably startled last night if his shade had happened to hover over the Lafayette Theatre, in the center of Harlem's Negro section. In all the three centuries in which Shakespeare has been played there has probably never been a more remarkable production of the tragedy of "Othello" than this first performance by Negro players before a big audience of their own race.

In the first place, the drama was produced after only two weeks of rehearsal by a company of persons who had never acted before in their lives. The players were, on the whole, astonishingly capable, and the performance, considering the difficulties that faced the actors, needed little charity on the part of the critics. It was the audience, unfortunately, that failed to live up to Shakespeare. Most of them, having never seen or read the play, had very little idea of what it was all about, and they were only too ready to giggle when they should have wept.

Iago as Comedian.

Edward Wright as Othello, was formidable enough in appearance to hold his audience until the fatal dagger scene in the last act, but John H. Ramsey had seen fit to adorn his Iago with a fuzzy wig with long, curling locks and an absurd mustache. From behind the erect, rather flapping ears of a Newfoundland dog, Iago's rather humorous appearance was rather comical. Naturally, it was too much for the gravity of the audience, who mistook him at the outset for the comedian.

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When Desdemona lay in her four-poster waiting to be murdered by her liege lord the scene struck the audience somehow as irresistibly funny. Shakespeare was given to punning even in his most tragic scenes, but on this occasion, when Othello remarked in a voice that would have awakened anybody else, but the lady who was waiting to be strangled, "Put out the light! Put out the light!" the yell that greeted

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Of Earlier Life Here And Was

Booth's Valet.

The establishment of a negro stock company at the Colonial Theater in this city, to open in the fall, is something that has been expected for some time, as the colored population here is large and the visits of "Black Patti" and other entertainers from time to time have been profitable. The proposed stock company will operate also in Washington, Philadelphia, Boston and New York. A variety of plays will be offered, some of them musical. There will also be at least one Shakespearean production, "Othello."

The famous negro tragedian, Ira Aldridge, although he was not born in Baltimore, passed a considerable part of his early life here and was for some time dresser for Junius Brutus Booth, the elder, father of Edwin, John Wilkes and J. B. Booth, Jr. Aldridge, in course of time, went on the stage himself and first attracted attention in Russia. Afterward he played throughout Europe and also in this country. His most noted character was Othello, in which he was considered by European critics to be masterly.

Played At Mud Theater.

In this city Aldridge is not known to have played anywhere but at an old theater, long since dismantled, at the corner of Holliday and Pleasant streets. It was popularly known as the Mud Theater, as it was in the section called the Meadow, on account of the marshy character of the ground there. In fact, in early times the whole district was often flooded.

Aldridge is described by those who saw him as tall and muscular, and possessed of a powerful voice, which he used with good command. In his acting he was a close imitator of the elder Booth. The third act of "Othello," in which the tremendous jealousy scenes occur, and the fourth, where they are continued, and particularly the fifth, where Desdemona is strangled, were performed with an astonishing realism. When the Italian tragedian Salvini visited this country and appeared in "Othello" there were some who had seen Aldridge in the same part and who said that the Italian's rendering was not more terrible. In killing himself, upon the discovery that Iago had deceived him in regard to the matter of Desdemona's unfaithfulness, Aldridge cut his throat, instead of stabbing himself with a scimitar, according to the preceding usage of tragedians, and this piece of business was afterward borrowed by Salvini and created a sensation.

Mulattress As Desdemona.

In Europe Aldridge played with a white woman as Desdemona; other-

wise, the play would have been meaningless. In this country a mulattress of a complexion nearly white had the role. In New Orleans and Louisville there was some discussion over the situation; but it was admitted that there could be no objection to a Creole.

Aldridge never achieved the success in this country that he enjoyed on the other side of the water. In his day there was a certain prejudice which not even art could overcome. He had the satisfaction, however, of knowing that wherever he was seen there was an acknowledgment of his remarkable histrionic gifts.

Nearly Precipitated Riot.

An idea of the powerful realism of Aldridge's acting is given by an incident that happened in New Orleans and that nearly led to a riot. Aldridge in his version of "Othello" introduced the first scene of the fourth act, generally omitted. While Othello, Iago and Desdemona are together the nobleman, Lodovico, comes on with a paper of military orders for Othello. As Othello reads he overhears the conversation between Lodovico and Desdemona in which she makes a reference to Cassio, of whom Othello is jealous. The Moor murmurs to himself, and Desdemona, imagining that he wishes to speak to her, advances with her hands held out caressingly. Othello in his jealous rage smites her across the face.

On the night in question Desdemona, who loves him, amazed and horrified that he should strike her, shrank back and hid her face in her hands, weeping convulsively. Persons in the audience at once rose and cried out to Aldridge: "Get off the stage! Get off!" and a disturbance seemed imminent. However good sense prevailed and the play went on again to the end.

W. E. M.

"Within the Law" Receives

Big Ovation at the La-

fayette Theatre

The New York Times

"Standing Room Only" Sign Is Again

Hung Out as People Flock to

See the Sensational Drama

With the start of the regular theatre season, Seventh avenue between 131st and 132d streets is wearing the appearance of the theatrical district on Broadway these nights, and the Quality Amusement Corporation is keeping up the pace set some time ago. This week they have brought back for a return date "Within the Law," and the sensational drama is again playing to capacity houses afternoons and evenings, repeating only the remarkable success which attended the show here some time ago, but that scored in Baltimore last week.

The superb manner in which the colored cast got over their work in Baltimore threw a scare into the big white houses in that city and two

well known white theatrical managers announced this week that from now on colored people can occupy seats in the first balcony in their Jim Crow houses, but the colored brother and sisters seem to be satisfied with the Colonial and trying their best to show their appreciation for the noble fight put up by Mr. Robert Levy and his associates in securing for them a theatre where they can feel perfectly at ease while enjoying the best that Broadway can send.

Mrs. Charles Anderson is not only repeating the hit she made when she first appeared in "Within the Law," but is looking even more charming, and seemed to have become inspired by the way she was treated by the critics, both white and colored, in Baltimore last week, and at the present writing she is again swaying the thousands that are flocking to see her in the drama in which she first won even the skeptics who entertained doubts of her ability to more than hold her own with the best in our theatrical world. To attempt to speak of her work in detail would only be repeating what we have already said and those of you who might not have seen her in the present show would do well to hasten around to the magnificent playhouse on 7th avenue.

Again we have with us our irresistible friend Miss Cleo Desmond, whose artistic work in the drama brought forth words of commendation from not only the people that patronize the Lafayette and the paid critics, but from other sources that would make even the heart of some of our well known "stars" beat with pride. Her work is of the same brand that we all like and she, too, is scoring the same old hit. Sidney Kirkpatrick fits well into the part of Inspector Burke while "Villain" Clarence Muse is again at his old tricks. Arthur Ray is indeed a polished member of the bar, and in conformity with his make up, which savors of a Frenchman, he has the grace of a Parisian. In Muse and Kirkpatrick we have a combination that can always be depended on to get the most out of their work especially when it deals with the police and the underworld.

Little Charlie Olden brought us a big surprise by the way he is handling the part of Joe Carson, a crook, and while we must confess that we had our doubts about his ability to play the part now made famous around here by Creighton Thompson, we are bound to give him our mitt for the fine manner in which he is playing it. A. B. de Comathiere as a flashy stool pigeon adds a touch of comedy to the work by his almost English manner, and when he twirls that monocle the house comes down. Miss Orma Crosby Baquet plays the part of Helen Morris nicely. In fact, many are of

NEWS

Baltimore, Md.

NEGROES ON STAGE

Stock Company Announcement Recalls Aldridge.

Tragedian Passed Greater Part

the opinion that she handles it better than her predecessor in the first presentation of the show in Harlem. Miss Mattie Wilkes is also playing nicely the part of Edward Gilder's private secretary, while Charles Moore and Albert Knorr come in for their share of the applause.



LAWRENCE CHENAULT.
Conceded By All Critics to Be the
Leading Performer With the Qual-
ity Amusement Corporation,
Who Returns Next Week
in "Mme. X."

PASSING FOR WHITE.

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

SINCE the vogue of the Anita Bush Stock Company in Harlem repeated demands have been made by members of the race that this popular dramatic organization present sketches dealing with Negro life. The chief criticism aimed at the offerings of the company has been that Negro characters and Negro environment are entirely ignored by those who are doing so much toward cultivating a taste among colored theatregoers for the dramatic. So in compliance with this insistent request the Anita Bush Stock Company will give a condensed version of "The Octoroon" at the Lafayette Theatre, commencing Monday, January 10.

"The Octoroon" created quite a sensation in theatrical circles several decades ago, and while all the characters in the piece are not Negroes, the central figure is a colored girl with a few drops of Negro blood in her veins who is loved by a white man at first ignorant of her racial identity. The presentation of this sketch comes at a time when white America is awakening to the fact

that there are thousands of colored people throughout the country of Negro origin who are living in their respective communities as white people.

The recent controversy in Detroit over the racial identity of the wife of a prominent doctor, who, although possessing blue eyes and blond hair, was accused of being a colored woman, and the more recent case of Mrs. Frank Leslie, whose will was attacked in the courts of New York on the grounds

MRS. CHAS. H. ANDERSON
who will appear in "The Octoroon" at the Lafayette Theatre next week.

that she was the daughter of a slave in New Orleans, forcibly bring to the minds of the white people that such conditions really exist and that the so-called color line is more mythical than real.

Of course, the presentation of "The Octoroon" at the Lafayette Theatre will prove to be of dramatic value only to the colored patrons. It will be in no sense educational, for few colored Amer-

icans are ignorant of true conditions. It would be hard to find a colored person over sixteen years old who does not know of some Negro who is "passing" for white. The last play to prod the minds of the white American public that many colored Americans are posing as Caucasians and marrying into white families was Sheldon's "The Nigger," which was produced some years ago at the Century Theatre. Put on at the psychological moment, for instance about now while the Leslie and other racial identity controversies are fresh in the public mind, "The Nigger" would create a greater furor than it did when originally produced by Winthrop Ames.

Arrangements are being made to put on a condensed version of "The Octoroon" on an elaborate scale, and twelve people will be used in the cast, among them being Anita Bush, Carlotta Freeman, Charles H. Gilpin, Andrew Bishop and "Dooley" Wilson, the regular members of the company; J. Francis Mores and Mrs. Charles H. Anderson, wife of the popular dancing master. Mrs. An-

MRS. DEANIE GEORGE
who will appear in "The Octoroon" at the Lafayette Theatre next week.
derson will make her New York debut as an actress next Sunday. Over sixty minutes will be taken to present the sketch.

Those previously fired with ambition to write Negro plays and sketches, but who deplored the fact that there was no demand for their offerings, now find

that conditions have suddenly taken a change for the better and that there is a market for sketches of merit. Miss Anita Bush is offering a prize for the best sixty-minute sketch dealing with Negro life.

"The Gambler's Sweetheart," in which the Anita Bush Stock Company is appearing at the Lafayette Theatre this week, is perhaps the most ambitious of all their efforts, and Messrs. Bishop, Wilson and Gilpin and Misses Bush and Freeman are living up to the reputations they have established as thespians.

THE GARRICK THEATRE INCIDENT

On Saturday, April 15th, an article appeared in the Chicago Weekly Review, page 5, as general comment on an incident which occurred at the Garrick Theatre, published in the Chicago Defender of April 8th. Briefs of the article was that William B. Hudlun, a member of the Appomattox Club, had purchased tickets for the Garrick Theatre, main floor, for himself, wife and sister. Mr. Thompson, an employe of the Chicago Board of Trade, and others. The substance is that the party was held up when they presented their tickets by attaches of the theatre and had trouble in getting their seats. On the week following I commented in a general way on happenings of the kind which I herein re-produce, quoted as follows:

"The Colored gentleman who bought some seats for the Garrick Theatre and then had some trouble in getting his guests seated on account of some prejudice among the attaches, is a badger incident. Just who was to blame or how both parties behaved is unpublished history. The man may have passed for white to get the tickets and if he had been black he may not have gotten them, is all in the reasoning of the argument, hence the badger is in the case. All white people are not prejudiced but their sympathy is much overlooked by the race who do not consider the condition which had caused a lingering flame of injustice. Single handed fights against conditions of prejudice does not adjust matters immediately. The best and most intelligent white people of the North especially, do not applaud prejudice as a silent problem for graduation. The most intelligent Colored people see it that way. There is nothing in friction. Nothing but a cordial method of treatment will prevail. The successful Negro is an eyesore to some poor white men and the only way to meet the situation is to show cordial respect for a Roman majority. Some successful Colored people think they are too good to be publicly identified with the people of their own race and go where they are not wanted. What is the use? It is far better to buy a balcony seat than to bother to be humiliated. Booker T. Washington's supreme recognition came by not forcing the race question by friction, which now stands for an example. The Grand Theatre is a good equivalent. Why not go there?"

I met Mr. and Mrs. Hudlun on Easter Sunday coming from church and was taken to task about the matter. I assured Mr. Hudlun that I had only commented on the matter as a problem without any reflection upon him personally or the party, as no names were used. And I assured him that he has a perfect right to buy seats in the orchestra circle of down town theatres if he so desires, and the law should support him. Mr. Hudlun intimated that his fight was not altogether single handed. One of the members of the Board of Trade, he said, had advised him to go to the Garrick Theatre to see "Ex-

perience," stating that the play is instructive. Mr. Hudlun is very light in complexion and could easily be mistaken for white. His hair is straight of a dark brown complexion. His wife is not reflection of either parties' color that I mention the facts. I am solving the problem of conditions, as they exist, wherein the Negro race is confronted by ignorant prejudiced poor white people. The intelligent white men, some of them, who own the theatres, have the same condition to fight. Just for instance: I was given an order to see Miss Bush, the actress, by the white proprietor of the Grand Theatre. To my surprise, the Colored stage manager held the order up, but I have not rebelled. I would not like to see the poor misinformed fellow lose his job. In the Hudlun case the Defender demands an apology or discharge of the guilty party.

Washington Star

MAR 4 - 1916

"RACHEL," A RACE PLAY GIVEN BY LOCAL CAST

Intended to Awaken Public Interest in Reputed Wrongs of Ten Million Negroes.

"Rachel," a race play, in three acts, by Angelina Grimke, was presented by the drama committee of the District of Columbia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People at the Miner Normal School last evening. A capacity audience was in attendance. The performance is to be repeated this evening.

"Rachel" is a strong play, in which the point of view of the people on the colored side of the color line is set forth. It is, however, full of pessimism, with the general doctrine that if children are born to pursue a life in which suffering must be a part, then it were better that they should remain unborn.

Wrongs of Race Depicted.

Wrongs suffered by the colored race as a result of what was termed by one character "the white man's blight of prejudice" are depicted in a forceful manner. In all the play presents a view of the condition of colored people throughout the United States. It is claimed on the program that "this is the first attempt to use the stage for race propaganda in order to enlighten the American people relative to the lamentable condition of 10,000,000 of colored citizens in this free republic."

The participants were uniformly excellent. Miss Rachel Guy in the role of Rachel, the leading character, displayed talent in a part that necessitated considerable range and ability along emotional lines. Miss Zita Dyson, as her mother, was also particularly good, as was Barrington Guy in the principal juvenile role.

Others in the Cast.

Others who took part were Nathaniel Guy, William Washington, Miss Blanch Butler and the following juveniles: Carlton Knorr, Vivian Jones, Vashti Norwood, Leanne Madden, Marjorie Knorr, Gertrude Payne and Elaine Washington. Miss Guy sang a number of solos in a pleasing manner.

Nathaniel Guy was director, Laura Bruce Glenn was manager and Gregoria Fraser had charge of the music.

Officers of the District of Columbia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who had the affair in charge, are: President, A. H. Grimke; treasurer, G. C. Wilkinson; secretary, W. B. Hartgrove.

Drama committee—Chairman, Laura B. Glenn; treasurer, Clara Burrill Bruce; secretary, E. C. Williams; Anna J. Cooper, T. M. Gregory, Carrie W. Clifford, E. E. Just, Gregoria Fraser, A. L. Locke.

BERT WILLIAMS.

As usual, Bert Williams is a bright star in the production of Ziegfeld's company, which opened in the "Follies of 1916" on Monday night, June 12, at the New Amsterdam Theatre, West Forty-second street. Practically every morning paper in New York on Tuesday morning had something especially nice to say about the colored comedian, one of them referring to him as "The real genius among the lot," which had already been called "the best of its kind."

The first part of the play is given as a Shakespearian revue in honor of Shakespeare's tercentenary, and in this part Bert Williams enacts the role of Othello, the jealous Moor. Some of the comments are given below.

(From The New York Times)

"You should see the scene from 'Othello,' with Bert Williams not to be outdone by any Frank Tinney as the Moor. He chokes his Desdemona (who has been flirting with one Vernon Cassia) till he is tired and then beats her with a sledgehammer, but it only irritates her. This is the only amusing moment in the Shakespearian revue. You should hear him sing his songs, particularly the one about the nouveau-rich Negro who renamed his children from the advertisements and Holy Writ, calling the youngest 'Hallud' after 'Hallud be Thy name.'"

(From the New York World)

"The talent assembled on the stage is the best of its kind. Bert Williams, the real genius among the lot, has better opportunities this year than usual."

(From the New York Press)

"Somehow neither George V. Hobart nor Gene Buck, who are responsible for the book and lyrics, gave to Bert Williams either the songs, the stories or the atmosphere that for four years have enabled the comedian to convulse audiences with laughter. Despite lack of opportunity, however, he drew many laughs."

Theatrical - 1916

Individual Troupes.

HERALD BROOKLYN EDITION

New York City

DEC 3

NEGRO PLAY AND CAST

FOR SETTLEMENT AID

"Hazel," Recounting Adventures of Northern Negro Child in Alabama, Benefit for Lincoln House.

How a simple negro child, born and reared in New England, goes to the home of her kinsmen in Alabama and compares the status of the negro in both environments will be told in the dramatization of Miss Mary White Ovington's "Hazel," a child's story which is to be presented next Wednesday evening and Thursday afternoon in the Central Y. M. C. A. auditorium for the benefit of the Lincoln Settlement, at No. 105 Fleet place. The cast will be made up exclusively of negroes connected with the settlement, and intimate touches supplied by them will give the production a realistic turn. Plantation songs and familiar negro melodies will be rendered during the performances, and special scenery will be employed to depict life on a great Southern plantation.

"Hazel" in book form is the fruit of careful observation and study among negroes of both South and North on the part of its author. In it she sets forth no doctrine and preaches no sermon, but is content with telling in a simple way the varied experiences of a young girl who leaves her Boston home for the South, where she encounters new conditions and tries to adjust herself to them. The book has had a wide circulation throughout the country, and the play, also written by Miss Ovington, should prove intensely interesting.

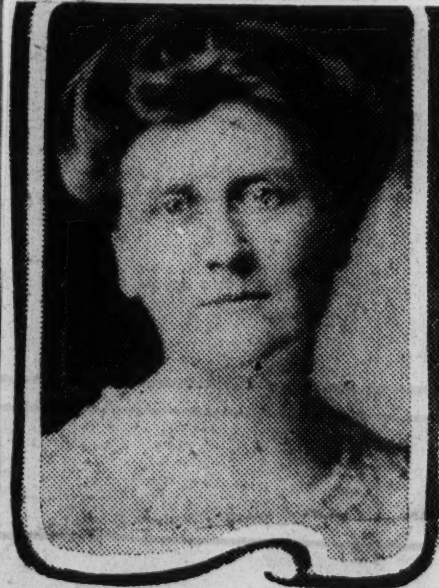
J. A. Shipp, formerly associated with Williams and Walker, is in charge of the work of staging the performances. He staged "Bandana Land" as produced by the well known negro comedians, and has won success in various other theatrical ventures. The music of the piece has been written especially by R. J. McPherson, whose song hits include "Teasing," "In the Right Church but the Wrong Pew," "Down Among the Sugar Cane" and "Never Let the Same Bee Sting You Twice." One of the distinctive features of the performances will be the costumes of the cast. They have been designed by Mr. Shipp personally and will add to the color of the production.

The Lincoln Settlement has been one of Brooklyn's philanthropies for eight years. In that period it has acquired the property in Fleet place, comprising a roomy house and an adjoining lot which has been converted into a playground. So far reaching is the influence of the settlement that practically every negro child in the neighborhood in some way is in touch with its activities.

In the early morning come the day nursery children, and then at nine o'clock

the kindergarten is opened and the house is in an uproar of merriment until noon. The children of the day nursery have their midday meal at noon, and the matron in charge puts her precious charges to bed for the afternoon. After school is out, at three o'clock, the school children flock to the settlement for club work, class work and the playgrounds diversions. Some receive instruction in cooking, sewing and embroidery. If the weather is fine the boys pass the afternoon on the playground, which is a mecca for all the children of the settlement during the summer. In the afternoon the attractions include carpentry, story telling, choral work and a well developed debating society. Sometimes the room is rented to one of the social organizations of the neighborhood, for the settlement co-operates with all that is best in its vicinity.

The Lincoln Settlement Board is as follows:—Miss Mary White Ovington, president; Dr. Henry Neumann, first vice president; Dr. William M. Brundage, second vice president; Mr. W. D. C. Field, treasurer; Mrs. Francis A. Wilson, secretary; Mrs. W. H. Barrett, Mrs. G. H. Decker, Mrs. E. P. Goodrich, Miss Julia Hand, Miss A. E. Munroe, Mrs. A. W. Seay, Mr. Frank H. Field, Mr. F. H. Gilbert, Mr. W. W. Jackson and Mr. R. L. Phillips, directors; Dr. Verina Morton-Jones, head worker.



MISS MARY WHITE OVINGTON.

ON BILL THIS WEEK AT THE HIPPODROME



ARTHUR RIGBY

EAGLE

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Miss Mary White Ovington's Negro Play, "Hazel," to Be Given for the Lincoln Settlement.

A genuine novelty is to be offered to the society world in December, the presentation on the stage of the Y. M. C. A. of a negro play, "Hazel," written by Miss Mary White Ovington of the Heights from her children's story of the same name. Colored people are to act in this, "Hazel" being a sketch of the life of a little negro girl in the North and South. The Lincoln Settlement of Brooklyn, which Miss Ovington founded and which cares for the colored race, is producing this play, and "Hazel" is to be given for its benefit.

Miss Ovington is a well-known Brooklyn woman and the daughter of the late Theodore T. Ovington, formerly of Willow street. For a number of years she has been making a careful philanthropical study of the negro in the North and his problems. Her play, directed by her, should prove exceedingly interesting. It is to have many features and will be backed by many prominent patronesses. December 7 is the date announced.

MORNING TELEGRAPH

New York City

JUL 14 1916

NEGRO STOCK THEATRE LEASED IN BALTIMORE

Colored Players Will Produce Musical Comedy and Drama, Announcement by Management.

(Special Dispatch to The Morning Telegraph.)

BALTIMORE, July 13.

It became known to-day that the Colonial Theatre has been leased by a New York corporation, which will shortly put in a negro stock company. The company has been successfully installed in New York, Philadelphia and Washington, and yesterday the deal was closed for Baltimore.

It will be the first time in the history of the stage that Broadway successes and standard dramas will be produced by negro actors. The plays produced will be of the highest order, and companies, which will play both drama and musical comedy, will be changed from time to time.

The musical comedy company will produce such plays as "Forty-five Minutes From Broadway," and the dramatic companies "Within the Law," "Bought and Paid For," "Under Cover," "Kick In" and several Shakespearian plays.

Charles F. Lawrence, former manager of the Colonial, was in the city to-day and turned over the Colonial to the new lessors.

LEADER

Cleveland, Ohio.

The negro drama is much in evidence. William Harris, Jr., recently tried out a play in which every character was colored. It failed. Now comes A. C. Winn of the Lafayette theater, New York, announcing that he will send five all-negro companies on tour during the winter. "Within the Law," "Madame X," and musical comedies will be presented.

"A good deal of comedy in Shakespeare," remarked Sidney Greenstreet, a well-known Shakespearean comedian, and probably one of the best Sir Toby Belchs' on the English-speaking stage, "is inherent in the spirit in which it is played. Perhaps the reason it is so much more difficult to get laughs in Shakespearean comedy than in the modern drama is due, to a large extent, to the changed conceptions of comedy in general. In the classical comedies the so-called "pointing" of a laugh is very necessary. This is done by securing the attention of the audience prior to the speaking of the actual laugh line. A pause, a wink, a grimace, all will help to prepare your auditors for the laugh line which is to follow. It is even possible to laugh yourself before you speak the line, and by so doing build up a laugh where there normally is

none. The whole idea is in leading the audience to anticipate that something good is coming. But no matter what sort of comedy it is, the comedian has got to feel that the thing he is saying or doing is funny, otherwise it won't be. Convince yourself and you can convince your audience."

Just as laughs may be built up, they may also be torn down. The ways of killing a laugh are numerous. Any movement by the other actors on the stage will distract attention and kill a laugh line. A noise in the audience, interruption by the next line, delayed or too ready response to the "feed" line, called "muffing the feed"; all these and many other causes contribute toward putting the kibosh on the merry chortle. It is in this respect that the man who "feeds" the lines holds the wires to the laugh dynamo.

A discussion of the mechanics of laugh-getting would not be complete without a brief word upon the environment of comedy. Many and many a perfectly good comedy has been killed because of its inappropriate setting. Edgar Selwyn, who has produced as many light, and farce comedies as any person in America, is a strong advocate of the fact that comedy must be played in light, delicate colors. This applies to costumes as well as scenery. In the second place, the scenery must not dwarf the characters and to avoid this you will find that the sets in such a play as "Rolling Stones," for example, are very much lower and smaller than those of a play such as "The Hawk," or "The Lie," or "Madame X." A large theatre is bad for comedy. Modern light comedy can only be played in the small, intimate theatre.



OPHELIA MUSE

Leading woman of the Lincoln Stock Co.



EXTERIOR OF THE LINCOLN THEATRE, WEST 135th STREET



WALKER THOMPSON

Leading man of the Lincoln Stock Co.

A Unique American Playhouse

UNIQUE among the playhouses of America is New York's New Lincoln Theatre, located on 135th Street, just West of Lenox Avenue. During the past three months, long enough for the success of the undertaking to be firmly established, the Lincoln, catering exclusively to a colored clientele, has housed a stock company composed of negro players under the direction of Billie Burke, a manager and playwright of long experience. Not merely as an oddity in the history of the stage, but as a factor in broadening the outlook of many hundreds of New York's colored residents, the work being accomplished at the New Lincoln merits attention. X X X X

Some seven years ago, Mrs. M. C. Downs opened a small motion picture house on the site now occupied by the commodious theatre. In time, the growth of the negro settlement and the consequent increase of patronage warranted an enlargement and the introduction of vaudeville. Emboldened by consistently satisfactory support, Mrs. Downs determined to give her colored patrons a building and an entertainment in which they might take pride—the same personal pride that a small town man feels in the prosperity of local institutions. This ambition was in part realized last October with the opening of the Lincoln as a vaudeville house. It has been more fully attained since the installation of Mr. Burke's stock company.

Both Mrs. Downs and her director, having had ample opportunity to study the characteristics of negro audiences, concluded that their patrons were particularly partial to quantity—the great-

est possible return for money invested. In introducing stock it was not deemed wise to abandon vaudeville; hence this remarkable combination of entertainment with the top price twenty-five cents at matinées and thirty-five cents in the evening. A new four-act play every week, six vaudeville acts changed semi-weekly, and photoplays changed every day, a full three hours' entertainment supplemented by a colored orchestra of seven pieces. With this policy in vogue, the 850 seats in the orchestra, balcony and boxes are nearly always occupied, and if the play is especially popular, late comers may be found standing three deep. Need it be added that the Lincoln Stock Company pays, for it is not a philanthropic institution.

The attitude of the audiences gathered in their own theatre—they regard it as such—has little in common with that of the sophisticated playgoer. Dramas, more ambitious than a vaudeville sketch, are a new experience to them, or rather, were a new experience when Mr. Burke staged his initial production. The response, particularly during the early weeks of the innovation, was emotional and erratic. Even now, with a clientele partially educated in stage effects, Mr. Burke finds that strong bits of melodrama, anything, in fact, that excites fear or horror in the audience, is met by laughter verging on hysteria. The action generally is followed in silence until a striking climax arouses a contagious and noisy demonstration.

Having experimented with drama of many types, the director has discovered a marked preference for productions permitting the use of

drawing rooms and pretty clothes. It is always a great point in a play's favor if the actors, and more especially the actresses, are well dressed. The negro is essentially interested in ladies and gentlemen and has scant sympathy for crooks or Western bandits.

Here, as in other stock organizations, the personal popularity of the leading players is proving of value. Walker Thompson, leading man, and Ophelia Muse, the leading woman, have become distinct favorites and competent actors under the tutelage of Mr. Burke.

Most of the company had gained some experience in vaudeville, an inadequate preparation for the work of producing a new four-act play every week; but they were willing to study and to rehearse indefatigably, memorizing each bit of stage business with surprising accuracy.

That the New Lincoln is exerting an influence on the social life of the negro district of Harlem is evidenced by Mrs. Downs' book, containing reservations for box seats, many of them engaged for a certain night of each week. Scrupulously neat, well ventilated, tastefully decorated and thoroughly modern in incidental conveniences, the management has overlooked nothing in making the theatre a wholesome institution in the community. In time it is probable that more pretentious plays will be presented. Thus far, the taste of the negro has been gratified by a varied assortment, including "Oliver Twist," "Bud Carey's Alibi," "Goldenhead" and "Tempest and Sunshine."

LYNDE DENIG.

Theatrical - 1917

Individual Troupes

Negro Actors Play Shakespeare Well

OCTOBER 21, 1917

Harlem Stock Company Does Serious Dramatic Work and Gains Highest of Praise for Its Ability

By F. T. VREELAND.

FIGURE to yourself a production of Shakespeare's "Othello" in which, contrary to the usual practice, the only one of the principal players who did not have to alter his facial color scheme was Othello, since Nature had already endowed him with his makeup. Then picture Sir Herbert Tree, until his death the greatest interpreter of the role who used burnt cork, stepping forward on the stage and with his hand in that of the greatest living interpreter of the Moor in his native tints telling an ebony hued audience that the performance "was one of the most remarkable things I ever saw in my life."

Such was the spectacle presented at the Lafayette Theatre, at 131st street and Seventh avenue, when one of the negro stock companies controlled by the Quality Amusement Corporation put on the Elizabethan masterpiece for the first time in the history of the race with a colored all star cast—and meant it to be taken seriously. This was only one of the many productions, all of them Broadway successes in their time, which Robert Levy, general manager of the company, placed upon his stage with the aim of showing his people that negroes could do serious things in the drama as well as appear in costumes like unto the Aurora Borealis shuffle their feet playfully, toss out a few jokes and grin.

When the enterprise was launched two years ago the audiences at first insisted on their birthright of showing a wide mouthful of teeth at the slightest provocation. So it was with Othello. It is recorded that the spectators took everything with becoming open eyed decorum, until Iago came on with a wig a size too large for him and a squeaky voice a size too small for him. After that, no matter how serious the situation, whenever Iago made a remark he was sure of a laugh every time. When Wilbur Wright as Othello, in preparing to disturb Desdemona's breathing,

which Robert Levy has turned the spotlight upon darkest New York. Up in Harlem's black belt one is surprised to find a theatre of such large dimensions and ornate exterior that is not devoted to weekly news pictures and flicker vampires. On entering one finds the auditorium as commodious and well arranged as though owned by the nebulous "theatrical trust," the proprietor evidently cherishing no desire to make this one of the artistic hencoops known as "little theatres."

There is no pretence that the decorations were designed by Joseph Urban, but on the other hand one will look in vain for an eczema of gilded scroll work which suggests bits of fruit among broken china. On the ceiling around the cluster of electric lamps the decorator has chastely contented himself with sprinkling a few dozen stars slightly larger than a General's insignia over a sky with the pale cold tints of the morning after. There are the customary tiers of boxes for the elite, a huge balcony swings around the rear of the theatre, and there is a gratifying lack of rafters reminding one of a town hall. One also notes thankfully that the management has not committed itself on the curtain or the sides of the proscenium to a statement that Ponsoby's Pills are good for the gizzard.

A glance around at the spectators before the curtain goes up enhances the impression that this is Broadway done in sepia. All classes are represented. The cream of colored society is there, either in the orchestra or the boxes; near by is a substantial looking mahogany citizen with an iron gray mustache and a white coat to his waistcoat. (This brings to mind that one observed several automobiles outside the door—one of them a limousine.) A sailor in uniform is not far off with his sweetheart pro tempore by his side. Here and there one perceives one or two white persons present as sightseers who are stared at far less than any colored person who strays into a Broadway theatre. The rest of the beholders are just folks amiable and abundant. They are very well behaved; during the intermission no one attempted to whistle, and one missed the functionary stationed in most stock company galleries with a long cane to preserve order.

Excellent Stage Effects.

When the curtain rises it discloses a well ordered stage flooded with bright light which, if it would not inspire the soul of David Belasco, has the merit of bringing out the performers' features in strong relief—and the stage electrician knows that is needed. The settings are well done, and the furniture doesn't bear the appearance of having been borrowed hastily from the neighbors.

On the particular night when this visitor entered the company was presenting Bayard Veiller's melodrama "The Fight," and the scenery, which was the same throughout the play, had been assembled carefully enough to

convince the spectator that he was viewing a business office and not an Elks hall.

Altogether the mounting was better done than in many stock theatres and vaudeville houses, where one setting does for an office, the Blue room at the White House, a waiting room at the Grand Central Terminal and the psychopathic ward at Bellevue. The acting also compared favorably with that exhibited in other cities where the stock companies carry the banner of art.

The members of the cast, male and female, had dressed their parts carefully, and loud checks were absent except in the mannish costume of one woman who represented a suffragette leader and might, therefore, be considered irresponsible. A few of the men were inclined at times to shout, but that was from excess of enthusiasm. Most of them allowed their naturally good voices to roll out in good conversational tones, avoiding revivalistic methods.

The ensembles were particularly impressive; the actors seemed to have an instinctive sense of tableau whenever the spreadagle passages were reached. The grouping at the final curtain of the second act when Jane Thomas, fighting for election as Mayor of Thomastown, announced to the villains en masse that she had them in her power—r-r-r was worthy of a football coach with dramatic gifts. One actor would occasionally strike attitudes reminiscent of "The Boy Stood on the Burning Deck," but on the whole the players worked into the skin of their parts without getting overheated.

In several instances they did this almost too literally, for four or five of them had whitened up with powder and possibly kalsomine. But the audience did not seem to be disturbed by anything curious. It was no more incongruous to them than it is to audiences in the Vale of Signs to see Americans in a Gallic stage setting speaking English, while the French peasants also express their thoughts in the purest Anglo-Saxon French, aided by an occasional "M'sieu" and "Madame" to complete the illusion.

But it was rather remarkable to a visitor from the other side of the theatrical Mason and Dixon's line to observe Amos Judson with a bleached complexion, a goatee and a nasal twang giving a lifelike imitation of a Yankee farmer. The audience for their part hailed with delight the appearance of Tom Brown, one of the star character actors, as Jimmy Callahan, an Irishman with a ruddy complexion, still ruddier hair and probably the richest brogue ever heard, compounded equally of Celtic and African accents.

Despite the obvious temptation Brown did not overdo the part, so that no Gaelic society need take steps inane. With very little movement he did an amusing scene with Abbiengs, Ivy Hubbard and George E. Mitchell, who as Jane Thomas holds up important business in the middle of her campaign for the Mayoralty order to telephone a custard recipe.

to a woman friend. The spectators seized on this moment, as they did on all such moments, with avidity, slapping their knees and turning a dental broadside toward their friends to make sure they were getting the full benefit of the scene.

The Leading Woman.

Not a little of the telling effect of the drama was sent over the footlights by Miss Mitchell, who was equally at home in the comedy and serious passages and who generally acted with repression—which doesn't mean that she sniffed into her handkerchief at crucial points. She has a well modulated voice, and she slid through the long speeches with the ease of one trained to read Shaw's lines in one breath. She has had many years experience, having matriculated in the Williams & Walker show and travelled in almost every country in the world, including Scandinavia. Besides English she speaks fluently four languages, which follow in the order of their appearance: French, Italian, German and Hebrew (modern). She used to appear in dramatic playlets at Hammerstein's old Victoria when that theatre was filled with crowds and smoke.

Another of the principal actresses is Cleo Desmond, who has also done her globe trotting early. Andrew Bishop is one of their best matinee idols, and with Inez Clough was loaned, like a regular Broadway star, to Mrs. Norman Hapgood last season when her company of colored players revealed to lower New York the dramatic talent in the negro character. Charles Moore has done good work in eccentric roles, and Tom Brown, besides playing in big vaudeville time here and abroad, is one of the comedians who have served to make "Charley's Aunt" deathless.

Charles Olden and Will A. Cook were two of the pianinies in the original "Old Kentucky" company fourteen years ago, so when this play was performed at the Lafayette they were merely returning to the scene of their earlier triumph. Francis J. Mores, who does the heavies, has played Italian impersonations all over the big time, but can still talk English fluently. William B. Townsend was one of the directors of John Lubert Hill in the "Darktown Follies," that half tone replica of the Broadway institution.

Most of the players have exercised a commendable restraint in picking their stage names, choosing appellations which members of a high toned Broadway chorus would scorn, such as William Gillam, Susie Sutton, Elizabeth Williams, Carlotta Freeman, Malcolm Thomas, Arthur Ray, H. L. Pryor, Lionel Monogas, Al Suthern, Frederick K. Hogan, Ophelia Muse, David K. Brisco, A. B. De Comathiere, Alice Gorham, Charles C. Taylor, John W. Hemmings, Ivy Hubbard and George E. Brown.

The organization of about thirty players is divided into two companies which alternate in presenting the play. Their working hours are de-

voted exclusively to art, since one company is always acting while the other is rehearsing and running through the mass formations for the following week. They are under yearly contract and play winter and summer, this being one of the few theatres where both audience and actors do not seem to mind the heat. Newcomers are added to the cast by the house manager, Eugene Elmore, who thus explained his recruiting system:

"I started a motion picture house several years ago on 135th street, near Lenox avenue, with vaudeville on the side, so naturally I was in a position to know all the negro talent and could pick out the best. When new players apply we put them down in the book, and he brought out a neatly bound volume after the manner of a German intelligence office. 'You'll see that applicants come from Newark, Philadelphia and as far west as Chicago—they write, ride or walk in. When they write we ask for their photographs, experience, height, build and other details—a good deal like the Bertillon system. We generally put a newcomer in a minor part to show what he's worth, and then let him work his way up to the top of the dramatic ladder, if he doesn't fall off. So Desmond, for instance, started this way and is now playing leads after a year's apprenticeship. Abbie Mitchell, on the other hand, in view of her previous training, jumped into the lead at the start and has held it ever since.

"We require our players to be quick readers and especially to have good voices, because they may be needed to go straight from heavy melodrama one week into musical comedy the next. In producing musical shows we have rather an advantage over Broadway managers, because almost every negro who can talk can sing. We have good choruses, and something else they don't often get on Broadway—a feminine orchestra. Besides being born singers, most colored persons are natural dancers, so we're all right when it comes to footwork.

"Our people are very quick to comprehend the things of the theatre, and Edgar Forest, the stage director, who is white, says that they get into their stride more readily than some white performers he's trained. We've turned out an absolute novice prepared to take his place in the first line in as short a time as three weeks, though it generally takes four or five.

"We started out with vaudeville and musical tabloids, but we soon realized the dramatic talent which could be brought out if it was given half the chance that the performer's comic abilities were. Now the actors actually seem to prefer the serious straight roles and as for the audience—well, no plays are too heavy for them. They used to laugh at the critical situations, but now during the highest of high brow works they don't even get restless.

"Nothing is too elaborate for us to put on—we aim high and we fly high.

It doesn't matter how large a cast is required—30 or 40 performers—we always get them. We pay large royalties for our plays, as there is no such thing as trade discount. We have our own scenic artists to paint the scenery similar to that in the original productions, our costumes are designed after the originals and we never use the same furniture. We've had the authors of plays we've produced come up here to see them and they praised the way we presented them."

One of these playwrights was Otto Hauerbach, who happened to drop in recently out of curiosity to see a performance of his play, "The Silent Witness," and on making himself known to the doorman was politely addressed as "Mr. Haberdasher." Booker T. Washington, before his death, was a frequent visitor to the theatre, and told the manager that he had never thought he'd live to see his people in their own theatre doing serious dramatic work. Bert Williams, the comedian, has also gone there. A leading Tammany politician and a City Magistrate have visited the house. It was in company with a party which a well known writer got up that Sir Herbert Tree viewed the performance of "Othello."

The management intend to allow their players in the future to do justice by other works of Shakespeare. They also aim to produce plays by negro dramatists. Mr. Levy has a theatre in Baltimore and Washington and, with the New York house, these are said to be the only three abodes of the drama in the world where negroes are engaged in straight theatrical work. In Chicago and the South, there are several small vaudeville houses, but they hardly emerge on the histrionic horizon. Mr. Levy hopes to establish a chain of negro theatres in fifteen of the principal cities of the country, so that one of his companies can go right over the circuit without changing their vehicle in fifteen weeks.

SUCCESSFUL RACE FILM COMPANY INCORPORATES.

2-16-17
Lincoln Motion Picture Co. of Los Angeles Incorporates for \$75,000—Increasing Demands for Eastern Releases Make Step Necessary—To Soon Produce a Race Feature Play Every Month.

The St. Louis Argus
Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 1.—(Special to Argus.)—The Lincoln Motion Picture Company of this city, the largest and only successful film company producing photoplays directed and staged entirely by Colored people, has recently been incorporated in this State at a capitalization of \$75,000. Organized and headed by Noble M. Johnson, the leading screen artist of his race, as well as a talented photo playwright and director. This company, in its six months' of existence, has produced and released through its own exchanges the two leading race feature plays before the public, "The Realization of a Ne-

gro's Ambition," a two-reel society drama of the Far West, and "The Trooper of Troop K," a sensational and thrilling three-reel reproduction of the historical Carrizal fight. A third release is now being produced and the increasing demands by exhibitors for faster releases made the step of incorporating a necessity.

The releasing organization is about completed with general booking offices in Omaha, and branch exchanges in the various centers as follows: Chicago, 3129 S. State street, Tony Langston, manager; St. Louis, 3411 Lawton avenue, W. H. King, manager; New Orleans, 531 S. Rampart street, D. Ireland Thomas, manager; Atlanta, 192 Auburn avenue, R. Black, manager; Philadelphia, 526 S. 16th street, Clarence Edward Wells, manager; with negotiations under way for a New York exchange.

The incorporators and directors are Noble M. Johnson, J. Thomas Smith, Clarence A. Brooks, Geo. P. Johnson and Dudley A. Brooks.

NOBLE M. JOHNSON.

Well Known Actor Who Is Showing Some Interesting Developments of Race Progress in a Hitherto Untried Field Ample Prepared For His Work and Is Winning His Laurels.



The progress of the colored people of the United States in education, business and the various professions is

creditable and worthy of commendation. There are few avenues of industry into which some member of the race has not engaged with measurable success. This advance is largely due to education, aspiration and able leadership through organized effort. In this connection we doubt if any organization has been more helpful than the National Negro Business league.

In the new field of development of racial activities, such as light dramas, vaudeville and photoplays, the race is making splendid headway. The Lincoln Motion Picture company, with headquarters in Los Angeles and a branch office in Philadelphia, is one of the most potent movements launched by Negro capital. The company has for its object the presentation of motion pictures showing Negro progress as portrayed by Negro characters.

It offers a direct contradiction to the films that present the Negro in an altogether erroneous light. In this direction the company has done much toward educating the public relative to the best side of the Negro's life and to break down impressions, based altogether upon prejudice and injustice. The company was organized primarily to meet this condition and to furnish to the ambitious young men and women of the race an unexploited field.

The president of the company is Noble M. Johnson, who is one of the best known young men in his line among us. Mr. Johnson is employed with the Universal Photoplay company and has starred in such well known photo dramas as "Intolerance," "The Western Governor's Humanity," "The Death Warrant" and others. He knows every phase of the business, and in this direction he is able to bring to his work the background that is necessary to make it real and interesting. The officers are Dr. J. Thomas Smith, vice president and treasurer, and Clarence A. Brooks, secretary, all of whom are well known business men.

The entrance of the Negro into this field, which is the fifth greatest industry in the world, is doing more to get the correct side of Negro life before the nation than any other single agency. The first Negro picture produced by this company was entitled "Realization of a Negro's Ambition," which was a two part drama based upon love and adventure and which presented the true ambition of a colored youth's aspiration.

Tuskegee Institute Lincoln Motion Pictures at Institute Chapel

The Institute Chapel was filled to capacity on Tuesday evening, March 13th, to see the two pictures, "Realization of a Negro's Ambition" and "The Trooper of Troop K," presented by the Lincoln Motion Picture Company of Los Angeles, California.

The two pictures, both of which present in a thoroughly interesting way the better side of life among the colored people, make a very strong appeal, in contrast with the burlesque types which we are accustomed to see in plays presented by other companies. The audience at Tuskegee Institute manifested their most emphatic approval of their choice between the two classes of pictures by their frequent and prolonged applause during the presentation of the two photo plays. Both Mr. Noble M. Johnson and Miss Beulah Hall portrayed their parts with artistic appreciation and they were supported by able assistants and thoroughly appropriate settings.

Such pictures as these are not only elevating and inspiring in themselves, but they are also calculated to instill principles of race pride and loyalty in the minds of the colored people. No student present last Tuesday evening who witnessed the bravery of the Negro troopers could help feeling a quickening of their patriotism and their love of race. A few Sunday evenings ago Principal Moton in his Sunday Evening Talk referred at some length to the bravery of Sergeant Bigstaff and the other members of the Tenth Cavalry during the engagement at Carrizal. No doubt many of the teachers and students recalled these remarks and were more deeply impressed with the significance of the gallantry of the Negro soldiers after seeing the picture.

The Lincoln Motion Picture Company is an all-Negro corporation and like many other similar companies has selected California as its studio-home. Almost in the shadow of Universal City, a city built solely for the purpose of making motion pictures, the Lincoln Company has produced the two pictures which were shown at Tuskegee and they are now at work on another film of Negro life. The company has branch distributing offices in Chicago, St. Louis, New Orleans, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Omaha, and is negotiating for offices in New York City. They are to be congratulated upon their success.

Mr. D. Ireland Thomas, manager of the New Orleans office, in company with an experienced operator, had charge of the presentation at Tuskegee Institute.

Theatrical - 1917

Individual Troupes

CAN THIS BE THE NATIVE

By ROBERT C

AMERICAN DRAMA?

DURING one of the rehearsals for the Russian Ballet last spring Robert Edmond Jones, who designed the scenery and costumes, was standing in the wings, watching the dancers. Beside him stood a colored man, who was serving in various capacities about the theatre—errand boy, scene shifter, general utility man. He, too, was watching the dancers. If a cat may look at a king without offence, there certainly should be no harm in that.

Tribune
Suddenly he turned to Jones and said: "That's not right. They don't do it right." *New York City*

And the colored utility man then proceeded to elucidate to the designer his ideas on the poetry of motion. The Russians were too studied, he intimated. They thought about the move they were going to make next, and thought clogs free motion. A dance should be natural, a gesture spontaneous, a movement unpremeditated, to be really beautiful. And he demonstrated what he meant. Oddly enough, Jones didn't laugh. These artists have a queer sense of humor.

Three Plays of Negro Life To Be Acted by Negroes

In fact, he was so much impressed by the power for natural grace and freedom of motion disclosed in the colored utility man that, when he heard of the three plays which Mrs. Emile Hapgood is to present, written for negroes and to be acted by negroes, he offered to design the scenery and costumes and to attend personally to the production. This will indicate the plane on which this new movement of the theatre is to be handled. There will be no negro

minstrelsy and no tawdry imitation of white-folks melodrama. White actors couldn't play these parts. They don't act well enough.

The plays are to be given at the Garden Theatre, beginning on Thursday, April 5. The author, Ridgely Torrence, has conceived the idea of doing for the negro theatrically what was done for the Irish natives by the Irish Players. Synge and Lady Gregory have taken the things that lie deepest in the Irish nature and dramatized them. They have put into their plays the emotions and spirit which can be expressed better by Irish players than by any other players on earth.

A Utilization of Those Qualities in Which the Colored Race Excels

Now, there are just as innate and peculiar qualities in the colored race, qualities as easily adapted to dramatic expression and as capable of delicate characterization as any which make "The Playboy of the Western World" what it is in the theatre to-day. In the negro there is a beauty of voice, a musical sense of rhythm, a plasticity of pose and emotional richness which cannot be equalled in any other race. It is on these qualities that Mr. Torrence has tried to make his three plays depend.

Of these plays one is a tragedy based on the legend of Simon of Cyrene, the African who carried the cross for Christ on the way to the Crucifixion. In the field of design in connection with this scene Robert Jones has revelled, and there is full play for the lithe, free motions which only the African in loose robes can execute.

Two Plays Deal with the Modern Problems of the Negro

The other two are realistic playlets, dealing with modern negro life. One, "The Rider of Dreams," is a comedy of the American city, of the big, expansive, lazy animal who dreams of basking in the sun and playing the "git-ar," while legal tender for the support of himself and wife breezes in through the window in some providential manner. The reaction of the city on this nature, the city, with its brick realities and get-rich-quick schemes, makes a remarkable playlet which is remarkably acted. I know, for I saw a rehearsal, and in comparison with it the professional performance of well known white actors which I saw in the evening was like a magic lantern show.

The third play of Mr. Torrence is a tragic bit of realism entitled "Granny Maumee," the chief character of which is a weird and primitive negress. Her son has been burned by a mob, and she has devoted her life to the purification of her race. Her devotion to this idealment of this theme makes the piece one of unusual interest. It was performed at special matinees of the New York Stage Society two seasons ago, with Dorothy Donnelly in the leading part.

The cast for all three plays has been chosen from colored people from all over the city. Few of them have been acting in negro stock companies, for it was found that long association with melodrama and comedy written for white actors had made them less natural in their speech, more stagy in their gestures and not so well adapted to the expression of the pure African as those

who have not imitated themselves away from it.

Much Reliance Is Placed on the Actors' Natural Inclination

Many of those chosen have had experience in elocution and dramatic reading or in vaudeville, where their natural talents had been developed. I saw one girl, who last week was on a vaudeville stage in Brooklyn, rehearsing the part of a stately Ethiopian woman, and there was a dignity of pose and richness of tone in her work that were as far removed from the trained-seal circuit as she herself was from the Ethiopia she was interpreting.

A few of the actors have never had histrionic experience at all. But each one has been selected because of his or her particular fitness for the part to be played. The morning rehearsal which attended was a triple-barrelled affair. In various corners of the big stage were little knots of characters going over their lines. The general effect was of the musical, softly undulating drone of particularly intelligent bees.

The director and author have not tried to direct in the sense that a company of white actors have to be directed. The producers are trying to give the players as free a rein as possible, hoping that they will play the parts as they feel they ought to be played. It may be necessary to stand by and call out to a cast of white actors just how to make this gesture, or read that line, what position to take when up-stage or how to walk when advancing to the footlights, but in this case it is felt that it will be better to let the players make the first move themselves. Then, if they end up standing squarely in front of some one else or find a pose which is out of keeping with the rest of the pict-

ure, the director may direct. But in matters of essential beauty in intonation and movement it is fairly safe to wait for the negro actor to demonstrate it for him or her self.

A National Negro Theatre Lies in the Background

I saw one lithe youth, who was rehearsing the part of an Egyptian slave, make an obeisance before the king (who was not there). It was a move which, if it were being rehearsed by an average actor, would have to be done over, at a conservative estimate, twenty-five times, and then probably abandoned as impossible. At the first attempt this colored boy, out of his own intuitive sense of what was right, made as perfect and complete a gesture as could have been drawn with a pair of compasses and with infinitely more animation.

Mr. Torrence has a large vision. He hopes, with these plays as a foundation, to build such a movement as will eventually need an organization of its own to carry it on. A National Negro Theatre, perhaps, with plays written by colored playwrights, dealing with the many problems of negro life, acted by colored players who devote their whole time to the performance of this service to their race. He has taken his inspiration from the Irish Players. Ten years ago their success could hardly have been prophesied.

A Serious Movement, It Should Be Taken Seriously

It may be that Thursday night will see the beginnings of a new movement on the American stage. Potentially, it is as rich in possibilities as any that have preceded it. It all depends on the spirit in which the public receive it. If they go expecting to see burlesque they will not only be disappointed; they will be ashamed. If they go with a sympathy for the attempt and an appreciation of its difficulties and aspiration they may be witnessing the first strings of a really distinctive American drama.

AT LAST, THE RACE DRAMA

Those who doubt that colored actors can better portray types with which they are familiar and in sympathy than they can imitate white types, as well as those who profess to believe that there is not enough essential difference in the mode of life and thought of the two great American races to warrant a different drama for the colored portion of the population should visit the Garden Theatre and see with what sympathy and understanding the colored players there are acting the plays of Mr. Ridgely Torrence, dealing with colored life and ideals.

The race drama arrived some months ago when the Lindsey Dramatic Association, encouraged by the fight for a drama of our own, made by the dramatic department of this paper, took in hand and presented a play by Mme. Jones, entitled "Who Was to Blame?" Since that presentation other harbingers of the race drama have appeared. But only now has the race drama really come into its own. It should be the patriotic duty of every colored person to keep it there! While the failure or success of Mrs. Hapgood's attempt largely rests with its reception by the white theatre-goers, the colored people can aid materially by generous and steady patronage. Surely colored New York can support three theatres at the same time.

NORA BAYES IN SONG

One song in particular, "Bon Bon Buddy," temporarily put me in a reminiscent mood; for the picture of a finale of one of the acts of Williams and Walker in "Bannanna Land" came before me, and it was with a feeling of remorse that I compared the status of the colored musical show of today with that of the season of 1907-8. Did you ever see an old hat or an old dress made over that looked better than when new? Well, the old songs sung by Miss Bayes sounded better than in days gone by—all except "Bon Bon Buddy." Miss Bayes could be dubbed "the revamper of old songs." She could carry the sobriquet with becoming dignity and win for herself additional honors before the footlights.

Very often it is punishment to sit and listen to the rendition of one popular number, and there are times when you hear song after song during an evening's performance without being aroused out of a semi-lethargic state. So when Miss Bayes can entertain you for two hours with songs holding membership in the "Ancient Order of Has Beens," it cannot be gainsaid that she is a talented individual with emphasis on the talented.

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Yes, Miss Bayes wears many pin, Buster Austin, Nettie Chase stunning costumes; in fact, she in Martha Tobias and Edith Nelson introduces a new style with every There are real Indian chiefs, and song. But I do not consider this Indian princess, near Mexican, such a feat, for there are thou-make-believe Egyptians, cowboys, sands of members of the gentler Hawaiian dancers and others, making sex who can make as many changes quite a democratic gathering, a during an evening as Nora Bayes sort of a congress of races, with and with equal celerity. With the Negro predominating in point them the problem is not wearing of numbers.

Miss Bayes puts on "glad rags" with startling rapidity to help create atmosphere. But without being able to memorize all her songs and without her power of endurance the clothes would be of little consequence. In a witty little monologue Miss Bayes states that she secured most of her atmosphere from Fifty-third street, although I think she would pull a bigger laugh by saying 135th street. The Fifty-third street joke is becoming somewhat passé.

And it certainly was good to see colored singers and dancers on a Broadway stage once more! Next to Miss Bayes' memory and endurance exhibition (not overlooking her costumes) the colored performers showed up in a big way. From a numerical standpoint, the colored aggregation at the Thirty-ninth Street theatre far outnumbers the white performers. But as Miss Bayes cuts such a mighty figure in the entertainment reference will have to be made to the Tennessee Ten and cakewalkers as a dash of color.

The Tennessee Ten has been making a big hit in vaudville, and Miss Bayes has played a trump card in corraling this energetic and clever bunch. They can sing, dance, create merriment and what's more carry a Jazz Band that is some more Jazz Band. I'll wager it can out-jazz any Jazz Band in these parts, and produce a "director" who can outdance any director when it comes to eccentric stuff. There is also a little girl who sings in the first scene of Part I, who must even remind Miss Bayes that she is not the only warbler at large. Charles Johnson, Ruth Austin, Buster Austin and Mamie Palmer win applause in their cakewalking, and some of the other colored performers are Laura Pram-

NORA BAYES

19TH ST. Theatre, nr. B'way. Evgs. 8:30
Mat. Wed. & Sat. 2:30. 50c to \$1.50

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N. B.—TAKE NOTICE

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"Go to see and hear Nora Bayes."—Journal of Commerce.
"Most interesting entertainment in town."—Globe.
"Nora Bayes is the champion gloom dispeller."—Evening Sun.
"A real success."—Mail.
"Unusual unique entertainment."—Journal.

Theatrical—1917

Individual Troupes

"CHU CHIN CHOW"

(BY LESTER A. WALTON.)

NEGROES play no small part in making "Chu Chin Chow," the most spectacular production ever staged in America, which opened last week at the Manhattan Opera House, a sensational success. In "Chu Chin Chow" it is necessary that negroid types be used to create the proper atmosphere, without which the presentation would be robbed of much of its realistic appeal.

There are thirteen scenes in this marvelous theatrical spectacle, and in every big scene may be seen Negroes in profusion. Here, there and every where they walk and dance about, giving color and a definite naturalness which stamp the producers as masters of detail. Even the street gamins who impress with their excellent pantomime work, although they speak not one word, hail from the vicinity of 135th street.

It is a pleasure to be able to state that there is a member of the Negro race in the cast, a Miss Matty Thomas, who is one of the hits of the show. As *Bostan*, a servant of *Ali Baba*, this young woman does a bit which sparkles withunction and originality, and her hearty laugh is so infectious that every time she utters an expression of merriment the audience willingly joins in.

Who is she? "Just an ordinary young woman residing in New York with no previous training for the stage," to quote Morris Gest, who, in speaking to me about Miss Thomas two weeks ago remarked that there was a colored girl in the cast who was going to be a hit. Mr. Gest's prediction has come true.

Three hundred people, representing many races, are used in "Chu Chin Chow," and as there are Japanese, Chinese, Malays, etc., who also come under the heading of "colored peoples," I have used advisedly the term "Negro," not wishing to see the meritorious work of members of the race confused with that of others.

There are about seventy-five Negroes in the production, and their presence on a New York stage in a piece, the time of which is given as one thousand years ago, is a sort of chronological somer-

sault. In our musical productions depicting the Negro of today, he is usually represented, or rather misrepresented, by white people under cork. In "Chu Chin Chow" we have real Negroes portraying scenes true to life hundreds of years ago. At the Hippodrome some seasons back a levee scene, although elaborately staged, lost its effectiveness because the genuine article was not used. At the time I commented on this defect in these columns.

Messrs. Elliott, Comstock and Gest have had the temerity to do the unusual—put a large number of Negroes in the biggest Broadway production that ever hit New York. When you recall that only a few years ago there was some adverse comment over the funniest low comedian in America becoming a member of Ziegfeld's Follies, the proper appreciation may be had for the daring shown by these three young producers. This step is truly revolutionary.

White and colored people crowd the spacious stage at the Manhattan Opera House at the same time, and Miss Matty Thomas' work is mostly with Miss Lucy Beaumont, who plays the part of *Mabubah*, the wife of *Ali Baba*. Can you picture a presentation of "Chu Chin Chow" with its present personnel in Dixieland?

"Chu Chin Chow," programmed as a musical tale of the East, is taken from "The Forty Thieves," a story familiar to readers of "The Arabian Nights." A new stock of adjectives is necessary to fitly describe this spectacular production, whose stage pictures are dazzling, at times bewildering, for their lavishness and wealth of detail. Silks and satins are carelessly shown in prodigal profusion, and the elaborate costumes and picturesque stage settings provide a most sumptuous feast for the eye. The lighting effects are new and novel.

"Chu Chin Chow" is not merely an ocular entertainment. It also delights the ear, some of the music being of the melodious variety. It cannot be said, however, that all of the artists do full justice to the vocal numbers entrusted to them. George Rasely, Felice de Gregorio and Miss Tessa Kosta make the most favorable impression as

vocalists. The young woman gives the most artistic singing rendition of the entire performance in the second act in the Blue Hall of *Kassim's Palace*.

Miss Florence Reed is a convincing *Zahvat-Al-Kulub*, winning sympathy with her beauty, grace and histrionic power. Henry Dixey, as *Ali Baba*; Tyrone Power, as *Abu Hasan*; Miss Kate Condon, as *Alcolom*; Francis J. Boyle, as *Abdullah*, and Miss Ida Muelle, as *Zatel-Demahi*, are among the important members in the cast who speak their lines as expected of finished actors. Although not in the cast, the work of George Bell, the Negro giant, who is 7 feet 11 inches, and hails from Georgia, is deserving of special mention.

Some of the other Negro actors are Messrs. Bellamy, Ray, Grant, Royall, Horner, Murray, Thornton, Oman, Woodward, Thompson, Fripp, Brown, Porter, Hayes, Slow Curry, Alfons and Misses Banks, Noble, Derocker, Dickerson, Oley, Royall and Hornton.

"Chu Chin Chow" is an imported article, the original production now being in its second year at His Majesty's Theatre, London. It is said that Messrs. Elliott, Comstock and Gest brought the piece to America at a cost of \$150,000. E. Lyall Swete, a prominent English stage director, was brought from the other side to stage it in America.

Having already won distinction as the greatest theatrical spectacle that ever graced the American stage, it would not be surprising if "Chu Chin Chow" established a new record in this country for attendance.

EVENING POST

New York City

MUSIC AND DRAMA

Mrs. Hapgood's Colored Players.

A singular, interesting, novel, and possibly significant, entertainment was offered last evening in the Garden Theatre, where three plays were interpreted by the group of colored players assembled by Mrs. Hapgood, in the presence of a very large audience—of white and colored spectators—which was always intent and cordial, and often enthusiastic. The performance was remarkable in many ways, but nothing, of course, could be more ridiculous or unjust than any attempt to judge it narrowly and arbitrarily by the established high standards of the professional white theatre. From the technical point of view, as might

be expected, most of the players exhibited a certain angularity, stiffness, and hesitancy—the inevitable and invariable result of insufficient training and experience—but there was no lack of either feeling or intelligence, and constantly the right note, not only of humor, but of genuine emotion, was struck with the surest intuition and surprising dramatic effect. In the case of nearly all the performers there was the evidence of the energizing thought preceding the action—one of the fundamental laws of the theatre—but with most of them execution followed too slowly upon the first conception, or prompting, of the guiding idea. The natural consequence of this is always an appearance of woodenness. The whole secret of what is known as spontaneity in acting lies in the facility and rapidity with which the mental design is translated into outward expression. This is the chiefest, and most difficult, of the lessons, which amateurs—the majority of these players are yet in this category—have to learn.

Considered as amateurs these colored players certainly did as well—and probably a good deal better—than ordinary white performers could have done under similar conditions. The work done by some of them proved natural capacity of no common quality and abundantly justified Mrs. Hapgood's enterprise. It would be easy to exaggerate the importance of it, but here, at least we have the beginnings of something like a folk theatre, entirely domestic—if not altogether national—and of an indisputable—if as yet incalculable—racial significance. Should it persist, and thrive, it will find within its own peculiar domain many great opportunities, and before long it will be doing better work in better plays. It might even rival the achievements of the Abbey Theatre of Dublin, which had a less propitious start. Of the three pieces on this opening programme, all by Ridgely Torrence, the most ambitious is the so-called *Passion Interlude*, "Simon the Cyrenian." This is that Simon of Cyrene who was compelled to "bear the cross" of the fainting Christ. That he was a black man is not impossible. Mr. Torrence, by a somewhat bold interpretation of the quoted text, makes Simon a noted warrior and rebel—the object of the mockery of the Roman soldiers, and thus presents him as an object-lesson of the cruelties suffered, in the past, by the negro at the hands of the white race. The scene is not without its sting or its appeal—whatever may be thought of its expediency—and was effectively presented, although the play itself, dealing with an endeavor of Procula, the wife of Pilate, to save Jesus by stirring up a revolt against the Romans, is somewhat vague and fragmentary. The outstanding features of the performance were the Simon of John T. Butler, a somewhat crude but never-

theless an arresting portrayal of a strong and heroic nature patiently enduring shame for conscience sake, and the Procula of Inez Clough. This latter impersonation was not only notable for its impressive picturesqueness, but for its intimation of emotional powers capable of great development. Lottie Grady, as an Egyptian Princess, and Jesse Shipp, as Barrabas, also deserve a word of personal mention. The general performance, with its decorative background, by Robert Edmund Jones, was entirely creditable.

"Granny Maumee," which has been played by professional white actors in this city, is a legitimate and striking play of negro character, but is unfortunate in its confusing attribution of Christian sentiment and Voodoo ferocity to its venerable heroine. She, it may be remembered, lost her eyes in an attempt to save her eldest son, who was burned alive by lynchers for a crime which he did not commit, and has ever since been filled with bitter enmity to the white race. To her sorrow, all her immediate descendants are female, and her one hope in life is that the child of her newly married daughter may be a boy of pure black blood. But her daughter is not married at all, but the mistress of her white employer, and when the old woman, whose eyes have been restored by miracle after prayer and incantation, realizes that the babe is of the wrong color, she dies of a broken heart after anathematizing and then half-pardoning the father. The piece is very crude, but contains much that is vivid and striking in its barbaric spirit and coloring, and finds an appropriate place on the present programme. The blind old grandmother is acted in the right vein of intense and purposeful menace by Marie Jackson-Stuart, and with considerable emotional eloquence, and she is well supported by her two daughters, Fannie Tarkington and Blanche Deas. The third play, "The Rider of Dreams," is awkwardly written, but contains some capital sketches of negro character. The principal personages are three, the industrious and methodistically inclined wife, who is fearfully concerned for the spiritual welfare of her lazy, happy-go-lucky, husband; Booker Sparrow, the alleged head of the household, whose belief in dreams and general shiftlessness involve him in theft and forgery, and a benevolent doctor who by his shrewdness and generosity restores happiness to the distracted household. Joseph Burt was capital as the irresponsible dorky in all the opening scenes, and Blanche Deas gave a thoroughly intelligent performance of the anxious wife. Alexander Rogers, as the Doctor, furnished perhaps the best bit of quiet, realistic human comedy of the whole evening.

Space will only permit a brief reference to the orchestral work, vocal and instrumental, provided by the members of the Clef Club, which was thoroughly delightful. The choruses, whether secular or religious, were given with a precision, zest, and beauty of tone which alone would have rewarded a visit to the theatre through the storm that raged without.

MORNING TELEGRAPH

New York City

COLORED ACTORS PRESENT 3 PLAYS

Begin Season at the Garden Theatre
With Works From the Pen of
of Ridgely Torrence.

R. A. JONES STAGE DIRECTOR

One of Pieces, "Granny Maumee,"
Has Been Produced at Special
Matinee by Stage Society.

GARDEN THEATRE—Three plays by Ridgely Torrence.

"THE RIDER OF DREAMS," a Comedy.
The Cast.

Lucy Sparrow	Blanche Deas
Booker Sparrow	Joseph Burt
Madison Sparrow	Opal Cooper
Dr. Williams	Alexander Rogers

"GRANNY MAUMEE," a Tragedy.
The Cast.

Granny Maumee	Marie Jackson-Stuart
Pearl	Fannie Tarkington
Sapphie	Blanche Deas

"SIMON THE CYRENIAN," an Interlude.
The Cast.

Procula	Inez Clough
Drusus	Andrew Bishop
Acte, Princess of Egypt	Lottie Grady
Battus	Theodore Roosevelt Bolin
Simon	John T. Butler
Pilate	Alexander Rogers
Barrabas	Jesse Shipp
The Mockers with the Crown of Thorns	Robert Atkin
The Mockers with the Scarlet Robe	Thomas William
Egyptian Herald	Frederick Slade
Centurion	Jerome Osborne, Jr.
Longinus	Ralph Hernandez
Soldiers	Jervis Wilson, Earl Taylor and Lisle Berridge
Attendants to Procula	Thomas William and Muriel Smith

By RENNOLD WOLF.

Whatever might be done to make the negro drama popular took place at the Garden Theatre last night under the inspiration of Mrs. Hapgood. Giving her full praise for an ambitious effort earnestly performed, it must be said that the drama of the blacks, as acted by blacks, is yet far from attaining a yogue in this community.

Perhaps full measure of praise is accorded Mrs. Hapgood and her all-negro company, when the efforts of both are pronounced creditable. If any came to laugh, they laughed only when and where the author and producer had intended. To be sure, the spectacle of stage boxes filled with negroes in evening dress, is not usual at New York first night performances, nor was the sprinkling of blacks in the lobby and the first rows of the balcony. Yet everybody present accepted the endeavor in good faith, and followed the proceedings attentively and respectfully.

Three one-act plays, all by Ridgely Torrence, constituted the bill. They were of a wide variety of idea and treatment. The first, "The Rider of Dreams," shows the contemporary negro as we know him—shiftless, superstitious and optimistic. It tells a little domestic story of an indolent darkey, who has fallen into evil ways through association with a worthless white man, and who has, by forgery, drawn from the bank, to "go into the stock market," his wife's lifetime savings, accumulated to purchase their home.

Pictures Domestic Life.

The playlet is interesting chiefly in its picture of the domestic side of the colored couple, maintained by the woman's industry. A pickanniny, cunningly acted by one Joseph Burr, and with the character name of Booker Sparrow, gave realism and an amusing touch. The best acting in this playlet is done by Alexander Rogers in the role of a benevolent old negro doctor.

"Granny Maumee," the second offering of the bill, is grim tragedy. The central character is the aged Granny, blind for fifty years since her attempt to drag from a fire her innocent son whom white men are burning at the stake. She is filled with hatred for the white race, and occasionally in her ravings reverts to the barbaric spirit of her ancestors.

She is expecting the arrival of her daughter with her baby son, and she is making elaborate preparations for the baby's reception. When the daughter, Sapphie, arrives the baby proves to be the illegitimate son of a white father, and the mother, regaining her sight through prayer works incantations and witchcraft in a desire to wreak vengeance on the white father.

The little piece is sombre, but rather gripping, and in dramatic power the best of the three presented. The end comes with the death of old Granny, who has forgiven the white man just before she falls prostrate. Marie Jackson, although not giving the semblance of Granny's great age, fits the part well. Fannie Tarkington is excellent.

The most pretentious production of the bill is "Simon the Cyrenian," built around the incident of Simon, converted, bearing the cross on which the Nazarene is to be crucified. An extremely simple but none the less effective setting shows the garden of Pilate's house. Otherwise there is little impressive about the playlet, save that it is acted earnestly and after the fashion of classic, stilted drama. John T. Butler looks an imposing Simon, but plays the role in differently. Lottie Grady acts the Princess of Egypt with some distinction.

Music Feature of Evening.

One of the features of the evening was the musical program, rendered by the Clef Club Band. As many of the numbers were vocal as instrumental, the

orchestra was a huge success, rendering a wide range of negro songs and melodies in keeping with the general scheme of the performance.

The staging by Robert Edmond Jones is adequate. The negro actors in the main proved to be capable enough without displaying any marked talent. Nevertheless, taken altogether, they are the most competent assemblage of colored players ever seen in this city. One of them bears the name of Theodore Roosevelt Bolin. Of course, he played Battus.

THE NEGRO PLAYERS.

Miss Henrietta Vinton Davis, the Race's Premier Elocutionist, Contributes Timely Observations on the "Race Drama" and Its Devotees.

The relation of the Negro to the legitimate drama and his ability to grasp the opportunities that are being placed within his reach, form one of the liveliest issues now before the nation. In the shop, on the highways and in the home, it is a burning theme and is being discussed in all of its phases by all kinds and conditions of mankind. New developments are being presented day by day, and a constant review of our progress and possibilities in the thespian arena is bound to be both interesting and instructive. The Freeman takes pleasure in presenting herewith a summary of the Hapgood innovation in New York City, through which ambitious colored players were given a "try-out" in the legitimate drama, with a Broadway house as their battle ground. The writer is Miss Henrietta Vinton Davis, the race's premier elocutionist, herself one of the ablest exponents of the Negro in the standard drama, and one who has always contended that the race must prove itself along the higher and more thoughtful lines of theatrical endeavor before it could claim the serious attention of the world of art or gain a permanent place in the annals of stagedom. Miss Davis' very timely and philosophical brochure follows:

The Negro Players.

To Dramatic Editor The Freeman.
I felt it my duty as a member of a race in whom the dramatic instinct is very pronounced, to go to the Garden theatre to witness the performance of the Negro Players in the presentation by Mrs. Hapgood of three one-act plays written by Ridgely Torrence. So on Saturday afternoon I hid me to this theater, that I understand has been closed for some time because of lack of patronage. Much to my surprise I found a very, very scant audience. The attraction had been well advertised, both in the newspapers and by posters, and the New York public, that is always in search of novelties and this is a genuine novelty in the theatrical world, seems on this occasion to have failed to respond in paying numbers. Whether this be from race prejudice or because they thought the plays mediocre is yet to be found out.

I had heard various opinions expressed by colored persons who had attended, and I had read various newspaper criticisms on the plays and players, but I went with an open and sympathetic mind, feeling rather grateful for the opportunity at last afforded our colored actors and actresses to appear in legitimate dramas in a Broadway house. I have never for a moment doubted their ability to measure up to the standard set by Broadway, but I had to see the vehicle that was given them. We have had musical comedies galore, most of them successful. We have out-sung and out-danced every other race. But it yet remains for a colored company to win success in the legitimate drama in the United States. Ira Al-

dridge won undying fame in England and upon the Continent, but was supported by a white company; and so in the United States we have individuals who have won some little success, but we have had no sustained effort either in the emotional or tragic drama.

There are some, even among the colored people, who question the ability of the colored actor in the very highest walks of the drama. I am not one of them, and after witnessing the work of the Negro Players at the Garden theatre, I am more confirmed than ever in my belief in their ability to portray the very best in the drama.

"The Rider of Dreams," the first playlet on the program, was a domestic drama, showing a certain phase of Negro life, particularly bringing out the belief in dreams, which by the way, is not wholly characteristic of the Negro, for I have yet to learn of any Negro being the author of or publishing a dream book. The characters were all well acted. Madison Sparrow, as played by Opal Cooper, would have been quite as effective had he not hurried his lines so much in his endeavor to convey the nervousness and weakness of an ignorant and superstitious man.

"Granny Maumee," the next playlet, in which the title role was played by Marie Jackson-Stuart, deals again with the superstitious side of Negro life. Marie Jackson-Stuart played her most difficult part of a blind old woman exercising the Voodoo deities with a sustained force that is worthy of a more than passing commendation. The

theme of the play—the *raison d'être*—is one that the colored people of the United States will scarcely put their unqualified endorsement upon.

"Simon, the Cyrenian," the last of the group of playlets offered, was very rich in costuming and scenic effects. If it were made into a play of three or four acts it would make a powerful drama. It is by far the best of the plays given. The character of Simon, taken by Mr. John T. Butler, was a painstaking piece of work. Miss Inez Clough, as Procula, was convincing, and Mr. Andrew Bishop has never appeared to better advantage than as Drusus. His clear enunciation, his dignified bearing and his naturalness was duly appreciated by the audience. Miss Lottie Grady, as Acte, Princess of Egypt, assumed her part well. Frederick Shade, as an Egyptian herald, and Robert Atkin and Thomas William, as Mockers with Crown of Thorns and Mockers with Scarlet Robe respectfully played their parts conscientiously.

The music by the colored orchestra featuring the plantation melodies, came in for their share of the applause.

Mr. Ridgely Torrence has written his plays with a sympathetic pen, but like most white men, he does not fully understand or grasp the Negro character. He emphasises the weak points in human nature and would have the public believe them to be weak points of the Negro character. From my contact in many lands I have found the Frenchman, the German, the Scotchman and the Irishman equally if not more superstitious than the Negro.

The play has yet to be written that shall give the Negro his first place in the dramatic world,—that shall show the poetic and romantic vein that is a part and parcel of the Negro and that shall prove his aspirations and longings are those which are common to all oppressed humanity.

There is in the Negro's breast—"A strange deep thirst for something higher, A longing after nobler things."

HENRIETTA VINTON DAVIS.
New York, April 14, 1917.

The Colored Players

A Theatrical Performance That No Person of Imagination Should Miss

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: New Yorkers will make a mistake if they are persuaded by the critics' acute sensitiveness to poor acting from going to see Ridgely Torrence's plays, now being given by the Colored Players at the Garden Theatre. The incredible stupidity of the plays' press representative seems to have kept both the colored and the white public from being prepared for the enormous significance and impressiveness of this production. Certainly the inadequate attendance at the second performance made one fear for the success of this unique and beautiful dramatic offering. But the audience was enthusiastic and got the thrill of poetic suggestion with which the occasion was charged. It was Good Friday.

And it was the day of the proclamation of war. As the solemn tones pealed out in the last play, with its setting for the Crucifixion—"They that take the sword shall perish by the sword"—you could hear the audience catch its breath as it realized the piercing meaning of this heroic little drama of non-resistance played before a Christian nation that was going into a world war on the very day that its churches celebrated devoutly the anniversary of this very warning.

But all three plays were filled with the symbolism of this gentlest of races. The young negro in the charming comedy "The Rider of Dreams" chants his ecstatic vision of wealth, only to find he has been tricked by the white man. But all he really wants, as the best idealism of his race really wants, is to "make his own music" and sing his own songs. The tragedy weaves with consummate art the two themes of the endless wrongs at the hands of the white race that burns its men and lusts after its women. The passionate hatred of the old negress rises to terrific heights, but her black magic fades before the remembered Christian appeal.

Whether Mr. Torrence succeeds or not in establishing the Negro Theatre, he has written three American plays which are beautiful literature and exciting and moving drama. "Granny Maumee" is a race tragedy which makes Synge as pale as a patch of Irish sky. There is nothing weirder on the stage than that scene where the three black women go through the magic rite. Tragic moment is built on tragic moment up to that last eerie night. These plays are so vivid and human that they almost act themselves. The negro actors seemed to me to play with delightful simplicity. The three plays are as beautifully adjusted in mood as the movements of a symphony. The stirring music of the negro spirituals which fills the entr'actes heightens the artistic impression. The rich suggestiveness of these plays makes the evening unforgettable. It seems imperative that no person with imagination miss this genuine dramatic experience.

RANDOLPH BOURNE.

New York, April 7, 1917.

Theatrical—1917

Individual Troupes

Negro Actors Make Debut In Drama at Garden Theatre: Given Most Cordial Welcome

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

Modern drama has given the stage a new and diverting form of entertainment that is one-hundred per cent American—the Negro play, acted by Negroes. The initial appearance of colored actors at the Garden Theatre Thursday evening, April 5, under the management of Mrs. Emilie Hapgood, in three playlets purporting to deal with Negro life, written by Ridgely Torrence, the poet, was a notable occasion, exciting more curiosity and commanding more general attention than any of this season's large crop of dramatic presentations.

For the first time in the history of the American drama Broadway playgoers attended a theatrical performance to look with a serious eye on the work of the Negro as a legitimate actor and to be swayed by his pathos as well as his humor. In the past the Negro's efforts to entertain on the stage have been confined solely to the field of comedy. Judging from the most cordial reception accorded the ambitious Thespians, who were compelled to respond to encore after encore at the end of each playlet, the launching of this bold dramatic endeavor was an unqualified success.

The plays, presented in their order, were "The Rider of Dreams," "Granny Maumee" and "Simon, the Cyrenian." Of the three "The Rider of Dreams" was the brightest dramatic gem, as the scenes were natural and faithfully portrayed types of Negro life. The serious sympathies of the audience were commanded by this piece, despite its being a comedy, because all of its prototypes were familiar and real.

"The Rider of Dreams."

"The Rider of Dreams" tells of a happy-go-lucky Negro, full of imagination, but imbued with very little of the practical side of life, who, while under the influence of a dishonest white man, draws the family savings, amounting to \$800, from the bank. It had taken the couple twelve years to save the money, which was procured without the knowledge and consent of the wife, whose name was forged, the incident occur-

ring the night before the date set for making full payment on the home. Opal Cooper, as *Madison Sparrow*, had vision of becoming a business man, having planned to make the \$800 work for him. To his wife, *Lucy Sparrow*, acted by Blanche Deas, he told with unbridled enthusiasm his intentions, and the tense moments of the playlet are when *Sparrow* finds out that he has lost the money and confesses to his wife that he permitted the white man to forge her name in order to get it.

The entrance upon the scene of *Dr. Williams*, played by Alex Rogers, occasions additional consternation, as the doctor, owner of the property, insists that the deal be consummated at once. *Lucy Sparrow*, knowing that the money has been taken from the bank and lost, begs for delay, but *Dr. Williams* is obdurate and commands her to sign a check, which he has brought awaiting her signature. It is then that the doctor discloses himself as a big-hearted, Christian gentleman. He informs the unhappy and badly-frightened couple that he found the missing money and would give them the deed to the house. A guitar, stolen from him by the white man and given to *Sparrow*, was permitted to remain in the latter's possession, *Dr. Williams* agreeing not to turn over *Sparrow* to the grand jury if the latter became a better husband, quit drinking and came to his (the physician's) home every morning and teach a son how to play the guitar.

It is in this piece that Ridgely Torrence appears at his best as a writer of Negro plays. His pictures are void of exaggeration and carry with them a cer-

tain spontaneity and naturalness that make a serious appeal. His gifts as a poet have also been used to great advantage in "The Rider of Dreams," having clothed his ideas with dramatic power and expressed them in poetry. Many of the lines are lyrical and far more euphonious than those heard in most dramatic offerings.

Opal Cooper was the most agreeable surprise of the entire performance. Heretofore he attracted favorable attention as a vocalist, this being his first venture in an important speaking role. He was best when telling *Lucy Sparrow* of his plans to become a business man and of the visionary schemes that prompted him "to make his money work for him." No white actor could modulate his voice with such effectiveness, for the flexibility and religious fervor to produce this singsong effect would be missing. Blanche Deas made an appealing figure as *Lucy Sparrow* and Alex Rogers gave a finished performance as *Dr. Williams*, showing a fineness of perception in the interpretation of his character. One of the best bits of the evening was done by little Joseph Burt, as *Booker Sparrow*, and the youthful actor, despite his tender years, played his part like a veteran.

Negro Dialect and Race Idioms.

The only fault I had to find with Mr. Torrence's construction of "The Rider of Dreams" was his needless use of dialect. I am not interposing an objection to the use of Negro dialect due to super-sensitiveness or because of any personal dislike against this form of speech. I look not upon it disparagingly, but hold it in high regard, believing it an accomplishment for one to master this peculiar American tongue.

What Mr. Torrence should have put into the mouths of his characters in "The Rider of Dreams" were the idioms of the race, not Negro dialect. There is a marked difference between the two. Besides, Negro dialect is less generally known to colored Americans than race idioms, as the latter are expressions in extended use and not confined to any section. Dialect is more of a variety of expressions of a locality, the dialect of one community usually being somewhat

different from that of another. And it is this difference that causes such varied opinions as to its genuineness.

Few Negroes of today say "dis," "dat" and "de money." Although you will find intelligent and illiterate of different sections using idiomatic expressions, such as "tote" and "you all." Granting that *Madison* and *Lucy Sparrow* talked about "de money," it is hardly probable that *Dr. Williams*, with a college education, would employ Negro dialect in conversation. Attempts at Negro dialect usually make the majority of white people doing Negro characters unnatural, for the types they portray are overdrawn, their interpretation of the average Negro's method of expressing himself not ringing true. The only false note in "The Rider of Dreams" was the introduction of Negro dialect in the place of Negro idioms.

"Granny Maumee."

The second playlet on the program was "Granny Maumee," a tragedy staged two years ago by the Stage Society, which gave several private performances with a white cast made up to represent Negroes. In this piece the most serious acting of the evening was called for, and in justice to the members of the cast they played their parts most acceptably. "Granny Maumee" deals with an aged woman who practices the black art, hating all white people because they burned her son to death, who had been mistaken by the mob for the man sought. In trying to rescue her boy from the flames "Granny Maumee" lost her sight.

Sapphie. Blanche Deas, a grand daughter, went to work for white people in the town, leaving her sister, *Pearl*, Fannie Tarkington, to stay at home with *Granny Maumee*. The curtain goes up showing *Granny Maumee* and *Pearl* making extensive preparations to receive *Sapphie*, her husband and child, this being *Sapphie's* first visit home since becoming a mother. *Granny Maumee* asks to be left alone with the baby, and upon getting her sight restored to her finds that the infant is a mulatto. Further questions bring from *Sapphie* that the child's father belongs to the family that led the mob which burned her son.

After putting *Pearl* and *Sapphie* in a trance, *Granny Maumee* proceeds to prepare for the coming of the father of the child, who has promised to meet *Sapphie* later on in the evening. The old woman plans to mete out to the white father a horrible death through acts of "voodooism," but when the visitor knocks at the door she relents and tells him to go back; that she and her dead son would show more kindness toward him than he and his people did toward them. Then she dropped dead and was found a corpse when the two grandchildren came out of their trance.

Marie Jackson-Stuart, as *Granny Maumee*, has lived up to the expectations of her friends by her skillful and

impressive portrayal of a difficult role. It would not be surprising if more was heard of her in the future in tragedy. Fannie Tarkington, it is said, is appearing before the footlights for the first time, and if this be true she has a most promising career in front of her. She went through her part without trying to be a bit theatric—she was just natural. Blanche Deas gave further evidence of her versatility by winning additional honor as *Sapphie*.

Simon, the Cyrenian.

The most pretentious of the group of playlets was "Simon, the Cyrenian," programmed as a passion interlude. "Simon, the Cyrenian," is a tragic adaptation from the Biblical story which tells of a black man carrying the cross for Christ on his way to Mount Calvary. In Luke 23:26 may be found the following passage: "And as they led Him away they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian—and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus."

Never have colored performers appeared in a more carefully arranged production, one in which minute attention has been given to every detail as "Simon, the Cyrenian." The public is indebted to Robert Edward Jones, the artist, for this perfect blending of colors and various negroid types. It was under his direction that the three playlets were produced. It is in this passion play that Mr. Jones' master hand is seen at best, and his reputation, both as an artist and designer of theatrical costumes and settings, have been greatly enhanced by his association with this novel experiment.

The cast of characters for "Simon, the Cyrenian," could not have been selected with greater care, and it is doubtful if a superior company of Negro actors could be gathered together to put on the piece. Inez Clough made a stately and sympathetic *Procula*; Lottie Grady was admirably cast for the emotional role of *Acte, Princess of Egypt*; John T. Butler convincingly looked and acted the part of *Simon*; Andrew Bishop made a commanding *Drusus*; Theodore Roosevelt Bqin, a talented youngster whose delineation of *Battus* was all that could have been desired, and Jesse A. Shipp, as *Barrabas*, faithfully essayed the part of a dejected follower, who told *Simon* that his spirit was broken.

Others who had bits to do, which were well done, were Robert Atkins, as the *Mocker with the crown of thorns*; Thomas Williams, as the *Mocker with the scarlet robe*; Alex. Rogers, as *Pilate*; Frederick Slade, as the Egyptian Herald; Jerome Osborne, Jr., and the *Centurion*; Ralph Hernandez, as *Longinus*; Jervis Wilson, Earl Taylor and Lisle Taylor, as soldiers, and Muriel Smith, as an attendant to *Procula*.

Something new in the way of entertainment between the acts was furnished by the Clef Club, under the direction of J. Rosamond Johnson, assisted by J. T. Brynn and William C. Elkins, which played Negro music and rendered spirituals in an inspiring manner. The singing made a decided hit.

The question as to whether the public at large will take kindly to the latest of theatrical experiments for many weeks to come is not known at this writing. If all the playlets dealt with contemporaneous Negro life, drawing modern pictures of the Negro of today, I should venture a prediction in the affirmative. The question which persistently flashes through my mind is: "How will the bulk of the white theatregoing public take "Granny Maumee" and "Simon, the Cyrenian?"

It is not expected that such liberal-minded and big-hearted men as Messrs. Jones and Torrence look at everything from our angle. Each day we are compelled to move about warily, so fearful are we of offending the white man, thereby raising the race issue, that caution becomes second nature. From force of habit, I therefore, find myself a bit curious as to the attitude of the white playgoer.

From a Negro's standpoint the extolling of the virtues of the black man, particularly in "Granny Maumee" and "Simon, the Cyrenian," are pleasing. But will the white man relish the idea of paying to hear the Caucasian depicted as a forger and thief in the first playlet; as an immoral creature, who "just would have his way," in the second piece, and as the assailant of Christ in the last playlet. It must be admitted that the three dramatic offerings treat the white man very much as the Negro is mistreated by the daily press—magnify his faults and suppress his virtues. But maybe our pale-faced brethren will not be as thin-skinned after all.

The "Colored Players."

In connection with such an important and laudable effort I am sorry to note that the promoters were induced to name the company the "Colored Players." I make this criticism knowing full well the dislike for the term "Negro" which some members of the race profess to harbor. But "colored" is too abstract a term to use in this instance. There is a difference between producing plays dealing with "colored life" and plays dealing with "Negro life." There is just as much difference between the two as plays dealing with "white life" and plays dealing "French or Irish life."

The Negro has no more right to claim ownership to the term "colored" than the Indian, Japanese, Filipino, Chinaman and Malay. "Negro" is the only distinctive race appellation that gives us the proper ethnological classification, and achievement only will win for the term "Negro" the proper recognition and respect a race title deserves. It must not be forgotten that the term "Christian," "Quaker" and "Yankee" were once used as terms of derision, but what high positions they occupy in the realm of nomenclature today? Why? Because they have been made to stand for something.

Nothing but good can come of the appearance of Negroes in Negro plays at the Garden Theatre, and a big movement has been started which is destined

to take on momentum as time goes on. The Negro has shown that he possesses an artistic instinct, temperament, intellect and ability to act, and the public has in turn shown that "Barkus is will-in" and will accept Negroes as exponents of the drama.

Mrs. Emilie Hapgood has endeared herself to colored Americans for having the temerity to do something no other theatrical manager of standing would ever think of attempting. She is entitled to a Carnegie medal for bravery, and while "The Rider of Dreams," "Granny Maumee" and "Simon, the Cyrenian" may not prove as big a financial success as "Magic" and other enterprises in which Mrs. Hapgood is interested, they will win for her more enduring fame.

The mission of the stage is twofold—to furnish wholesome entertainment and to instruct, and the Negro play can play a most important part in the solving of one of America's most vexatious problems, made so in a large measure because of the average white American's misconception of and indifference to what the Negro is really thinking and doing. "Getting the Negro right" without "getting the Caucasian right" will never bring about the desired racial amity in this country. The white man must be emancipated from some of the foolish notions he entertains about all colored peoples. As he does not visit our homes, our schools or our churches in large numbers, the stage must be employed to visualize Negro life and point out to the white American the inconsistencies of color prejudice.

However, I fear very little will be gained in the beginning if we get too serious and tragic, for even though the appeal may be every so worthy, very little good will be accomplished unless the white playgoer can be persuaded to go to the theatre. Attending a play is a matter of personal privilege, and no one is expected to exhibit enthusiasm over taking very bitter medicine. For this reason I favor serving out in the beginning drama for the "sugar-coated" variety, believing more good will accrue. The homely old saying that "You can catch more flies with molasses than with vinegar" might be aptly applied to the present situation.

Negro plays, acted by Negroes, will furnish the stage with a wealth of romantic material. The drama, America and the Negro will greatly profit by this daring and unique move in the interest of "Art for art's sake."

The Colored Players are well worth seeing.

VIRGINIA CITY OPENS LARGEST COLORED THEATER IN SOUTH LAND.

Roanoke, Virginia, is stated to have one of the best equipped and most beautiful Negro Theatres in the South. It is called the Hampton Theatre in honor of the Hampton Institute. Mr. Tiffany Toliver is president of the controlling company, which is composed of successful colored business and professional men.



INEZ CLOUGH
As "Procula."



LOTTIE GRADY
As "Acte."

N. Y. COMMERCIAL

s: New York



BLANCHE DEAS
As "Sapphie"



MARIE JACKSON-STUART
As "Granny Maumee."

found a movement for a negro theatre, Mrs. Norman Hapgood made two unfortunate selections. These, "The Rider of Dreams" and "Granny Maumie," together with "Simon the Cyrenian," a happier selection, were presented at the Garden Theatre last night with an entire negro cast. Her selection of the first two of the plays was unfortunate for the reason that they are founded on racial antipathies imagined by a white poet-playwright, and even if

the plays represented an actual racial attitude they could only prove harmful when interpreted by negroes.

In the "Rider of Dreams," Ridgely Torrence, the author of all three plays, endeavors to shift responsibility for the thievish propensities of the uneducated negro from the shoulders of the negro himself to those of his white associates. In the final line a buck, who lives by the sweat of his wife's brow while he thrums a stolen guitar, fervently inquires why he is not allowed to sing his songs in his own way and order his life to his own bent. This is purely an over-sympathetic white man's conception of the negro's ambitions.

"Granny Maumie" presents a more serious question because it deals with mob law, and is developed along dramatic, as well as probable lines. If conditions were what they once were, its presentation by whites might be justified upon propagandist grounds, but in view of the movement toward better things, there is no reason for its presentation, especially by negroes. The only thing it could hope to accomplish would be to keep alive a hatred in the breast of the negro that is better dead.

"Simon the Cyrenian" is a worthier effort. Here Mr. Torrence has made a play from the incident of the bearing of the Cross of Jesus by the Egyptian, Simon, that is full of color and beauty. It also gives the histrionic abilities of the negro actors and actresses opportunities that are lacking in the other plays. "Simon," as done by John T. Butler, a full blood negro, is a man of dignity and character. In this play the efforts of the entire cast were characterized by restraint and a well defined appreciation of the naturalistic in acting.

Unfortunately, as much can not be said for the first two plays. The performers who evidently for the most part knew very little about the southern negro dialect at first hand, took the conventional book dialect for a guide and made a dismal failure of their attempt. The exceptions were Marie Jackson-Stuart, Fannie Tarkington and Alexander Rogers. The others were best when they forgot to act. For many of the audience the singing, during the intermissions, of negro religious and folk songs by the orchestra, under the direction of J. Rosamond Johnson, was the most enjoyable part of the performance.

In her settings and properties Mrs. Hapgood evidenced an intimacy with the demands of the occasion that was particularly pleasing.

"THE SCAPEGOAT" IS FINDING A READY MARKET

"The Scapegoat," the latest and best of Negro photoplays, which was released by the Douglass Film Company, Jersey City, N. J., only a few weeks ago, has been finding a ready market, and the managers of the film company predict that the picture will make a new record for popularity among Negro photoplays.

After showing to capacity houses at the Franklin Theatre, New York, during its three-days' engagement, "The Scapegoat" was sent to the Howard Theatre, Washington, where its drawing powers were again convincingly demon-

News of The Theatres

In her choice of plays upon which to

Theatrical - 1917

Individual Troupes

IN VAUDEVILLE

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

WORD comes from the Middle West that the act of Fiddler and Shelton will not be seen in vaudeville this season, and that "Ruby" Shelton has become prominently identified with a musical organization in his old home town—Indianapolis. As to the future movements of Harry Fiddler, very little is known at present. Maybe he intends taking a long vacation—something he could well afford to do and then have a tidy sum in the bank for the proverbial rainy day.

For a number of years the act of Fiddler and Shelton has been known as the most refined colored turn in vaudeville, a distinction to which it became heir after the retirement of Cole and Johnson. For several seasons Fiddler and Shelton enjoyed much popularity over the Keith and Orpheum Circuits; later they went over to Loew, the two comedians stating at the time that they did not mind doing three shows a day as long as they received the desired financial remuneration.

With hundreds of foreign acts coming to America, creating an overcrowded market and making the supply far greater than the demand, Fiddler and Shelton experienced for the past two seasons the same difficulty as many standard acts that of securing compensation for their services commensurate with their ability and standing as vaudeville artists.

It may be that this is the chief reason for their retirement, which after all, may be only temporary. Let us hope that Fiddler and Shelton will be seen before the footlights in the near future, for the colored theatrical profession could

ill afford to lose two such clever artists who, at all times, have been gentlemen on and off the stage.

Another well known act which, according to Dame Rumor, will not grace the boards this season is the Kemps—Bob and Mae. For many years this team has traveled up and down the vaudeville circuits and is known from coast to coast. "Bobby," as he is generally called, although flirting somewhere around the half century mark in age, is yet the possessor of a tenor voice of much sweetness and power; and when the music begins to play he can prance about like a two-year-old.

Mae Kemp can put over a song with her oldtime effectiveness, but has tired of traveling, finding "home, sweet home" far more agreeable than the theatrical boarding house. Kemp and Howard will be the name of the new act in which "Bobby" Kemp will be the shining light, having taken for a partner the comedian of the one-time team of Howard and Mason.

Another piece of unauthorized news from the Middle West is that Brooks and Bowen may not be seen together this season, which, if true, is to be deeply regretted, for Shelton Brooks and Clarence Bowen have made a name as classy singing comedians. The illness of Clarence Bowen necessitated the cancellation of dates toward the end of last season.

Cooper and Smith, who were favored with consecutive booking last season will not be seen together this year unless their opinions have undergone a radical change from what they were a short time ago. Chris Smith and Henry Troy have

been seriously thinking of joining hands and presenting a vaudeville turn. With Chris Smith at the piano and Henry Troy doing the principal solo work they ought to provide some real entertainment.

During August it was reported that Downs and Gomez would be another act of standing to dissolve partnership. However their many admirers are hoping to see these two talented singers together when the season is well on its way. For a number of seasons Downs and Gomez made quite a reputation as singers of high class numbers.

It is most gratifying to learn that some of the standard teams will be seen on the larger vaudeville circuits this season, notable among them being Miller and Lyles and Moss and Frye. Big colored acts of the Jazz variety seem to be getting the preference over the Keith Circuit, but the regrettable part about this feature is that these turns are owned by white men. It is almost as difficult for a colored person to organize an act and win just recognition as it would be for a German to get into Paris and secure the kindly consideration of the French people.

Such a condition should not exist, particularly over the Keith and Loew Circuits, where colored performers in spite of unfair treatment, have ever been loyal. In the various strikes engineered by the White Rats, the colored vaudevillian has evinced that trait for which the race is known the world over—loyalty. There ought to be compensation of some kind for this friendly attitude, and Messrs. Albee and Loew would be doing the square thing were they to book more colored acts over their respective circuits this season.

Several days ago I heard a discussion in which the statement was made that the only box-office attraction in vaudeville to-day would be

Bert Williams. I did not take part in the argument, (which was in a barber shop) but during the animated cross fire of words, words nothing but words, I asked myself the following question: "I wonder what sort of a drawing card Mme Sissieretta Jones (Black Patti) and Mme. C. J. Walker would make in vaudeville?"

Advertised as "the world's greatest Negro singer" and the "world's richest Negro woman," with Mme. Jones doing the singing and Mme. Walker appearing in an interesting and instructive talk, it strikes me that here would be a winning combination—one that would prove quite an attraction.

THREE NEGRO PLAYS PLAYED BY NEGROES

—New York City
Interesting and Sympathetic
Dramas by Ridgely Torrence
Are Inadequately Acted.
APR 6 - 1917 —
STAGED BY ROBERT E. JONES

Mrs. Hapgood's Dubious Venture
Shows the "Quest of Types"
Reduced to an Absurdity.

The doors of that intermittent playhouse, the Garden Theatre, were thrown wide once more for the first presentation here last evening of three plays by the poet and occasional dramatist, Ridgely Torrence—three plays in which he seeks to interpret the traditions, sorrows, and aspirations of the negro race, striving to speak for it in the theatre as Lady Gregory, Mr. Yeats, and their fellows sought to speak for the Irish. The significant factor in their present production was the decision to assemble a cast of negro players for the varied and exacting rôles; and it was this decision which led—perhaps inevitably—to a disturbingly and needlessly inadequate performance. Mr. Torrence's plays are badly acted at the Garden—quite too badly acted. The sympathetic quality of his unusual and deeply interesting texts, the presumably gracious spirit and motive of the producer, (Mrs. Hapgood,) and the unerring eye of the director (Robert E. Jones) cannot make amends for the fact that the pieces are incompetently played. There is every reason why the producers of Mr. Torrence's works should have assembled for them a company of negro actors if they could have found negro actors of sufficient skill and

understanding to play them well. Probably they could not. Certainly they did not. As it is, the production at the old and draughty Garden looks like the familiar and much-berated "quest of types" reduced to an absurdity, and will seem to an irritated, few like another instance of the new producers' disposition to regard the actor's art as a rather unimportant factor in the theatre. Now and then the presence of a genuine negro in the cast illumines one of Mr. Torrence's touches splendidly, but these rewards are few and the price is high. For the most part, a Broadway cast of average competence could have served the plays far, far better. As a matter of fact, the presentation of one of these plays by Dorothy Donnelly and the Stage Society some seasons ago was incomparably superior, incomparably more stirring and more persuasive.

Of course the whole point of this lament is not that the producers of the plays at the Garden chose negro actors, but that they chose unskillful ones. It is too bad that a passion for literal and unimaginative realism in the theatre should have been suffered to do damage to three such interesting and unusual plays.

The first is a comedy, "The Rider of Dreams," an amused and friendly study of a playboy of the Southern world who dreams great dreams, but gets into all manner of trouble when he tries to obey them in an alien and fiercely practical world. He has no "honin' fo' honesty," and, while he's no drunkard, he admits he's not "a frantic" on the subject. You leave him at last hugging a guitar which a wise and understanding friend has given him as a means of expressing what is astir within him.

The second is "Granny Maumee," a tragedy in the life of an old negress, whose strivings in this world must ever resist the strong call of an ancient, half-remembered magic. For fifty years she has been sightless, her eyes burned and shriveled by the flames of the fire from which she had tried to rescue the blameless son the white men burned to death. They have been fifty years of solitary grief and bitterness, strengthened by pride of race and pride in blood that is "royal black." It is when, at last, another man child—a great-great-grandson—is intrusted to her withered arms that she calls on her gods for eyes to see him. Her sight is restored. And she sees that the baby is a white man's child.

The third, a more doubtful and more pretentious play, is "Simon the Cyrenian," building up a heroic legend around the barely glimpsed figure in the gospel according to Luke on whose broad shoulders the cross of Jesus was laid. It is the tradition of the renaissance painters, borne out by some archaeological research, that Simon was a black man and representations of him appear in the windows and on the walls of countless negro churches today.

"That Jesus' cross bearer was a black man is a fact that holds a certain suggestion bearing upon a phase of modern society." In this enigmatic manner does the program call attention to a rather obvious symbolism. In Mr. Torrence's play Simon is the hope of Africa and Egypt, the leader of a black revolution brewing against the power of Rome. Simon, thrilled by the very sight of Jesus, is all for leading an armed rescue from the mob, but, as the tragic procession passes Pilate's house—you can see the standards and hear the jeers of the crowd—the warning Voice preaches the gospel of non-resistance. It is only the voice from without that you hear as Simon humbly and obediently bends his great shoulders to receive the burden of the cross.

This play has been brilliantly staged by Mr. Jones and was received with enthusiasm last evening by an audience that enjoyed greatly the work of the Clef Club orchestra, whose members sang as they played between the acts, and at one time had the whole audience swaying to the great strains of "Go Down, Moses."

SECRETS OF NEGRO MINSTRELSY REVEALED BY NEIL O'BRIEN

ST. LOUIS MO TIMES
OCTOBER 23, 1917

Neil O'Brien, who comes to the Jefferson Theater for the week commencing Sunday with his minstrel company, has for his motto, "Think twice before you speak, then talk to yourself," but says the genial Neil, "If I had followed my own advice, I would now be in some other business and would know nothing of minstrelsy or burnt cork."

In the old days minstrel men were known as "burnt-cork artists," and they were so called because the process of making up consisted of burning a cork over the dressing-room gas jet and blackening the face with the residue. They still use cork, only it is prepared differently, and nearly all the material used by negro comedians is manufactured by a firm in Boston who make this a specialty.

PAPER AND CORK MIXED.

The prepared cork which the minstrel man uses on his face is still literally burnt cork, to which a little burnt paper is added to give it greater blackness. The materials are all ground up together and mixed with water and placed in tin boxes ready for use. It is a very simple process to rub this substance over the face and a very simple matter to take it off again, as nothing but soap and water is required for the latter purpose. No cold cream or any other grease is required to remove the evidence of guilt.

The minstrel man uses no other make-up than the black. The lips and edges of the mouth are left without any application at all, and it is the contrast with the black that gives them the necessary red color. "The wig," says Mr. O'Brien, "is rather important. One must have a good wig, and the rest of the illusion is due to the clothes and the general pose of the body."

TWO DIALECTS NEEDED.

"I found out one thing in the delineation of the darkey early in my career," the comedian adds, "and that is that I must have two dialects—one for the North and one for the country south of the Mason and Dixon line."

"The really Southern negro is a very different person from his Northern brother. In the South both whites and blacks have so many expressions peculiar to themselves, which we up here do not understand, that I find it is best not to try to speak a real Southern dialect, at least up this way. Down there they seem always to be trying to economize on their words. Where we would say, 'Gal, will you marry me?' they would pronounce the word 'marry' in one syllable, 'Gal will you mar me?'"

SOUTHERNER DISGUSTED.

"I once had a comedian with my company who was a real dyed-in-the-wool Southerner. We went South early that season, and he was a great hit with his compatriots, but when we came North again he did not go at all with the audiences and wanted to quit."

"I had to try to get him to learn to speak his dialect altogether. Southerners love so many expressions that are useless to us, like 'you-all,' which

may, and generally does, mean one person. 'I'll carry you-all there' means that the speaker will walk along with you and show you the way. If he were willing to carry your bag for you he would offer to 'tote' it."

"If you found fault with a Southern negro because he hasn't done something he had been told to do, he would reply, without meaning to prevaricate, 'I was just fixin' to do it.'"

NEGRO ACTORS OPEN PLAY SERIES

EVENING JOURNAL
New York City

Mrs. Emilie Hapgood and Robert E. Jones have united to give a series in the Garden Theatre of plays written for negroes. The first performance was marked by a hearty reception from an enthusiastic audience. Ridgely Torrence is the author of the plays.

"Granny Maumee" has been acted here by Dorothy Donnelly at a performance of the Stage Society, but the two other plays were new.

Mr. Torrence, who has been interested for some years in the dramas of negro life, had on this occasion entrusted the interpretation of his plays to negroes, who are grouped on the programme as "Colored Players." The interest in negro life as a stage theme has been observed recently in more quarters than one. Several plays dealing with that subject have been produced lately, and in addition to the representation at the Garden Theatre last night "Expiation," described as a tragedy of negro life, was acted at the Lincoln Theatre, in Harlem, by the actors of the permanent company.

EPOCHAL OPENING.

Mr. Torrence and Mr. Jones have allowed it to become known that they hope to accomplish for the negro in the theatre of this country something similar to the achievements of the group of writers who under Lady Gregory's leadership put the Irishman of the day on the stage of the Abbey Theatre, and a few others. It is not easy to see both situations in just the same light, although the evident object of the movement launched last night is to develop the negro as a figure in the drama.

The opening at the Garden Theatre in certain respects was epochal for negro plays and players, as it represented their emancipation from the

inertia and prejudice which has heretofore kept them from a general hearing, and gave them their first unspecialized and catholic audience. It doubtless will lead to other and even better things than the plays last night and will give the negro an opportunity for the expression in the theatre of his racial character, ideals and peculiar talents.

"The River of Dreams," a fanciful comedy, which served as a sort of curtain raiser, is a study in individualism, clothed in imperfectly composed negro dialect, in spite of which it displays occasionally a vein of humor.

"Granny Maumee" is a tragedy. "Granny" is one of those ebony mummies of great but uncertain age, and blind, who cherishes a bitter hatred of the white who lynched her only son. She hopes for two things. One is a male heir and the other is vengeance. There is a certain lofty pride in her respect for her pure royal black strain. Occasionally she reverts to Congo voodooism and works herself into a frenzy of rage. The scene takes place on the day of the return of her daughter, with the first male issue of the family. "Granny's" faltering sight returns to her sufficiently to discover that the baby is a mulatto. Her anger is terrible and she plans the destruction of the white father. But in her vision over her incantations she is taught forgiveness and then dies.

There is nothing essentially characteristic about the negro race in "Granny Maumee." It may have been written for negroes, but not with a deep and impressive insight into the negro character, and it is wearisome in its length. The incantation scene is suggestive of Macbeth's witches' chant.

"Simon the Cyrenian" is styled a passion interlude and is based on the familiar passage from the Gospel according to St. Luke. An explanatory note calls attention to the fact "that Jesus's cross bearer was a black man, as early renaissance painters represented him, a fact that holds a certain suggestion bearing upon a phase of modern society." The play is appropriately staged by Mr. Jones, who also designed the settings. The costumes were a trifle bizarre, with a tendency to bareness.

The musical programme consisted largely of negro folk songs under the direction of Rosamond Johnson.

Negro Players Display Talent At the Garden By Charles Dawson.

A CURIOUSLY interesting phase of dramatic endeavor was revealed at the Garden Theatre last night when Mrs. Hapgood exploited her so-called colored players in three plays by Ridgely Torrence, a white poet, who has chosen a black background for his work.

This attempt to preserve in dramatic form a part of American life should be considered as important in

its aspiration as the effort of Yeats, Lady Gregory and Synge to reproduce Irish peasant life. It has something in common, too, with the Welsh play "Change" and Hauptmann's "The Weavers."

Mr. Torrence has a real understanding of character, together with a poetic sense that lifts the lowly to surprising heights of imagination. "The Rider of Dreams" is quite as lifelike in its way as some of Lady Gregory's one-act plays. The hard-working, plous wife who has saved \$800 in the hope of buying a home, only to find that her wool-gathering husband has drawn all her money and then been robbed by a scoundrelly "white man," is a character to win the sympathy of any audience. It is the idle, dreaming husband, however, who is of first importance. With a guitar in his possession he is happy until he finds his money has been taken from him. When this is restored he merely asks that he be permitted to dream his dreams and make his own music. The old doctor who saves the little household from disaster was played effectively by Alexander Rogers. As the shiftless husband Opal Cooper acted naturally and sang bits of negro songs as only a darkey can sing them. Blanche Deas made the wife a simple creature, and little Joseph Burr brought a keen appetite for "mush" to the part of Booker Sparrow.

The natural gift of the negro for mimicry was most notable in "The Rider of Dreams." Songs by the darkeys who made up the orchestra led to "Granny Maumee," a folk-tragedy that resembles a miracle play when the sight of a blind old negress is regained through prayer. Her son has been burned to death and she has sworn to avenge herself through a male descendant. But when Sophie returns with a white child, "Granny," after performing voodoo rites, stops at destroying the babe and utters a warning to its father as he knocks at the door. Then she falls dead. A higher spirit conquers the spirit of savagery in this weird, gruesome play. Marie Jackson-Stuart worked a grim spell as "Granny."

The third play, "Simon the Cyrenian," in which an African carries the cross that is to bear the savior, disclosed little more than the limitations of the actors. Only Inez Elough, as Procula, gave it dramatic life. It may interest friends of a certain illustrious colonel, however, to know that the role of the youthful Battus was played by Theodore Roosevelt Bolin.

In "The Rider of Dreams" and "Granny Maumee" there was a display of talent that justified Mrs. Hapgood's strange ventures.

COMPANY FORMED TO GIVE NEGRO MOTION PICTURES The Richmond Plan

One of the most unique enterprises in this city, which is calculated to do splendid work in educating the public on matters concerning the progress of the Negro, is the Educational

Film Company, which has been organized for the purpose of giving motion pictures presenting the rise of the race.

The company has been incorporated and since its establishment it has done much to show Negro life at its best. One of its latest pictures has to do with the work of The Fifteenth Infantry, the Negro regiment in this city. The president is Stephen E. Hullett, who for the past four years, has made a close study of the motion picture business. Other officers are: vice-president, Thos. H. Lockery; treasurer, William Mickens; secretary, Samuel De Kalb, and T. A. Hebons. The company is prepared to give entertainments in churches, halls, and has offices at 139 West 135th Street.

JOURNAL

Providence, R. I.

APR 1 - 1917

Plays of Negro Life.

Under the sponsorship of Mrs. Emelle Hapgood, a programme of three plays dealing with phases of negro life in this country, and interpreted wholly by negro actors, will be presented at a theatre in New York next Thursday. All three plays were written by Ridgely Torrence, a negro dramatist whose "Granny Maumee" was given by the stage Society several seasons ago. "Granny Maumee" attracted much attention at the time, but no commercial manager could be found to risk his dollars on a professional production. It will be a part of the coming bill, together with "Simon the Cyrenian" and "The Rider of Dreams." Robert Edmond Jones is rehearsing and mounting the plays.

PICTURE MEETING WITH FAVOR.

"The Scapegoat," the new motion picture by the Frederick Douglass Film Co., 354 Pacific Avenue, New York City, N. J., had a very successful run in Baltimore, Md., and in Arkansas last week. It is showing in the Olympia Theatre, Philadelphia, this week. The picture is being well received by the managers of motion pictures houses, according to reports, and is highly approved by the public wherever it shows.

White Theatres Are Showing Race Films Hous to Observer

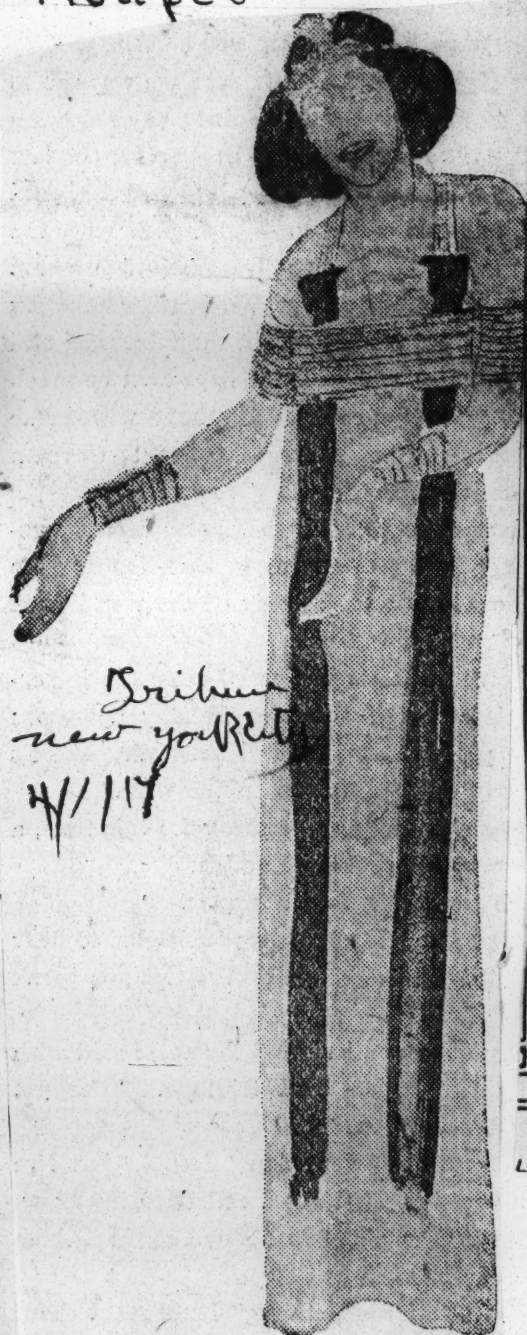
Greenville, S. C. (Special to The Observer).—The Colonial Theatre, the largest white theatre in the city recently gave a showing of the Lincoln Motion Picture Co. Inc., thrilling race photo-play, "The Trooper of Troop K" to a packed house and was highly pleased with the results.

Theatrical - 1917
Individual Troupes



*Briham
new york City
4/1/17*

The Litter Bearer
Costume design by R. E. Jones



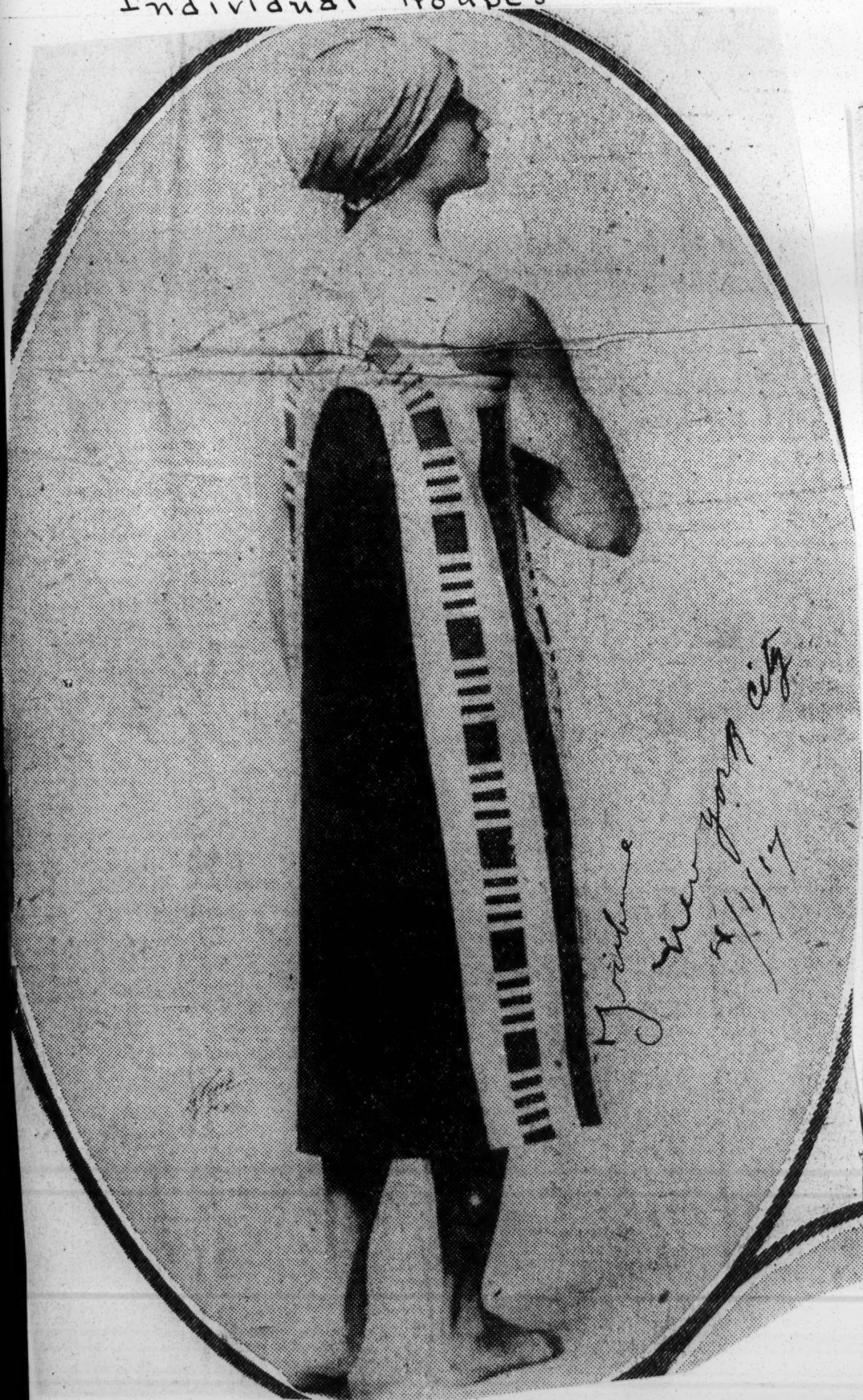
*Briham
new york City
4/1/17*

Acte, in "Simon of Cyrene"
Costume design by R. E. Jones



ABBIE MITCHELL,
LONG A COLORED FOOTLIGHT FAVORITE

Theatrical - 1917
Individual Troupes



Mme. Stuart Jackson as "Granny Maumee"

brings her into tragic conflict with her daughter, who has a white baby, and

an effective handling of a certain amount of witchcraft in the develop



*Tribe
new york city
N 11/17*

In the Rôle of Sophie in "Granny Maumee"



CLEO DESMOND,
ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL WOMAN PLAYERS

**CLEVER COLORED ARTISTS
SUPPORT NORA BAYES**

Nora Bayes is giving a rattling good entertainment of her own at the 39th Street Theatre, where she has surrounded herself with more than a score of clever colored players. It will be remembered that Miss Bayes gave an entertainment of song at the Eltinge Theatre early in the season, which was not only an artistic success, but a financial one as well. She then had a clever company of colored people, including Charles, Johnston Dean.

Miss Bayes has elaborated her show since the initial performance at the Eltinge until now she has a company of forty people, three-quarters of which are colored. Ralph Dunbar's "Tennessee Ten," the best colored act that has appeared on the vaudeville stage in a score of years is now part of the Bayes Company. The "Tennessee Ten" dance and sing and have a jazz band that is the best of its kind that has ever appeared on the stage.

Miss Bayes starts her performance of "The Songs You Love" at 8:30 every evening and her entertainment is such

that she can give it even on Sunday night. Her matinees are on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. Miss Bayes thinks the colored people ought to be informed of the magnitude of her show and she makes no bones about asking the colored people to come and see her show and her very clever aides.

TIMES

New York City

MAR 3 - 1917

Play of Negro Life by Negro Actors.

Mrs. Emelle Hapgood, who entered the ranks of the professional play producers recently when she presented Chesterton's "Magic" at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, has placed in rehearsal a play of negro life. The play will be acted by negro players. The play is by Ridgley Torrence, whose one-act drama "Granny Maumee" was presented by the Stage Society several years ago.

Theatrical—1918

Individual Troupes

BERT WILLIAMS QUILTS THE FOLLIES IN ATLANTIC CITY

Says Lack of Material Prompted Him to Withdraw from Cast.

HAS MANY OFFERS

Comedian Is Undecided at this Time as Whether He Will Star in Musical Show or Go In Vaudeville as Headliner—Relations with F. Ziegfeld and Klaw and Erlanger Continue Friendly—Has Been with Follies Seven Seasons.

The absence of Bert A. Williams generally regarded as the funnies of comedians, from the cast of the new Ziegfeld's Follies is the theme for much discussion in theatrical circles, while the dramatic critics, in the majority of instances, have expressed regret over his non-appearance from the largest musical show on the American stage.

When the show gave its initial performance Tuesday evening of last week in Atlantic City, Mr. Williams was greatly missed, as was the case when the production opened this Tuesday evening in New York at the New Amsterdam Theatre.

Mr. Williams reached a decision to withdraw as a member of Ziegfeld's Follies after Monday evening's dress rehearsal at Atlantic City. He decided that this step was absolutely necessary owing to the lack of material at hand to make a creditable showing—one that would do justice to himself as well as Mr. Ziegfeld.

In transporting the scenery of the Follies from New York to Atlantic City in the rain some of it was damaged and two of the scenes in which

Mr. Williams was to have appeared were cut out. At the dress rehearsal his work consisted of appearing in one short scene to create a laugh for another comedian and two songs.

The charge is made by Mr. Williams' friends that Ned Wayburn, stage director of the Follies, has not shown the proper interest in the comedian's welfare. That the principal fun-maker has not been able to show to best advantage for several seasons, due to poor material and poor "spots" is common talk in theatrical circles.

Mr. Williams speaks in the highest terms of F. Ziegfeld and Klaw & Erlanger, who have always stood by him from the first year he went with the Follies. Since returning to New York he has held several conferences with them, which have been of a friendly nature.

Bert A. Williams has appeared as the leading comedian of Ziegfeld's Follies for seven seasons, and this would have been his eighth. He has been the show's biggest drawing card on the road.

Speaking of Bert Williams' absence from the cast of the Follies, the dramatic critic of the New York World in Wednesday's issue said:

"Most of the old favorites of other seasons were in the scenes and there were some newcomers. One who was greatly missed was Bert Williams though Will Rogers, for the first time in black face, and mounted on an automobile, the mechanism of which was a patient horse, tried after a fashion, to replace him."

W. H. SALT SR., TELLS OF MINSTREL DAYS

BROOKLYN N. Y. EAGLE
JULY 7, 1918

Performed at Hooley's Opera House, on Court and Remsen Streets.

FEW MEMBERS OF TROOP ALIVE.

Three of Them, However, Still Reside in This Borough—Mr. Salt Was a Partner of Robert Hadley.

Hooley's Opera House, that stood on the corner of Court and Remsen streets, is still recalled by some elderly citizens, who enjoyed its nightly entertainments (1862) and who will be interested to know that several mem-

bers of the band are still living and that all of them reside in Brooklyn. A pleasant interview with William H. Salt Sr. (W. H. Christy) at his apartments on Pierrepont street recalled a few interesting reminiscences when he said:

"I performed at Hooley's Opera House in 1872-3. I also appeared in vaudeville and played in Washington and traveled on the road. After the opera house had closed I formed a partnership with Robert Hooley, a nephew of R. M. Hooley, and gave song and dance performances there for two years. Most of Hooley's band have now passed away, but besides myself two others are living, one of whom, Peter Ali, resides in this city. He played the cornet at Hooley's and afterward in Dr. Talmage's Tabernacle. Then there is Fred Parker, the pleasing tenor, now living in Brooklyn, who first brought out the song, 'Do You Love Me, Mollie Darling?' He was a famous minstrel singer in the West and went to London with Charles Chappell, the comedian, who is now in the movies in California."

"The Civil War produced a number of sentimental and comic songs, besides some stage plays. There is Sawyer's 'Weeping Sad and Lonely,' 'Who Will Care for Mother Now,' 'Mother Would Comfort Me,' and also 'Dear Mother, I've Come Home to Die.' Then there was 'Abraham's Daughter,' 'The Long Island Fair,' 'The Rail-splitters Ball,' etc. And the plays: 'The Return of the Veteran,' 'The Shaking Quakers,' 'The Conscripts on a Lark.' I often recall many of the anecdotes of the opera house, for Hooley's was one of the associations of Brooklyn."

R. M. Hooley, relinquishing the opera house, opened a theater in Chicago that was destroyed in the great fire. He returned to Brooklyn, where he had a benefit, and started the minstrels again in the same hall for a short time, and again opened a theater in Chicago. He died, leaving a large fortune.

In Brown's "History of the American Stage" we find the following biographical sketch: "R. M. Hooley—This enterprising manager and proprietor of Hooley's Opera House, Brooklyn, made his first appearance in the profession at the Assembly Rooms, Buffalo, August 17, 1845, with E. P. Christy minstrels, as leader. He remained with the party two years, performing in all the principal cities in the Union, after which time he left Christy's and visited Europe in the capacity of leader and business manager of the Virginia Harmonists, Captain Briggs, proprietor. They performed at Her Majesty's Concert Room, Hanover Square, London, and various theaters in the metropolis, and afterward visited the provincial theaters throughout England, Ireland and Scotland. About the year 1851 Mr. Hooley organized a company of his own and visited Boulogne, Cadiz, Paris and Brussels, returning to America in May, 1853. Since then he has appeared in nearly every city in this country. Retired from the duties of performer several years ago (1870) and became manager of Hooley's Opera House, Brooklyn."

George Christy, another of Hooley's band, is thus described in Brown's "History": "George N. Christy—Right name George Harrington, was born in Palmyra, N. Y., November 6, 1827. His first public appearance was made in the old Eagle Street Theater, Buffalo, in 1839. He had been engaged

by E. P. Christy, who had brought him out as a jig dancer. He left Buffalo with E. P. Christy and traveled with his legerdemain show. George Weldon was the faker and George was his confederate. George was with this faking show until 1842, when E. P. Christy organized the original Christy Minstrels and gave the first show in the spring of 1842, in a little hall in Water street, in Buffalo. George Christy took the bone end, with Lansing Durand as tambo. George was the first to do the wench business; he was the original Lucy Long and Cachuca. He then accompanied the troupe all over the country, until 1846, when they opened for a brief season at Palmo's Opera House (afterwards Burton's Theater) in Chambers street, New York. George was well cared for while he was with E. P. Christy, and during the last two years and eight months of his engagement he received the sum of \$19,680. Died in New York, May 12, 1868, of inflammation of the brain."

E. P. Christy is also described in Brown's thus: "This gentleman was the manager of the original Christy's Minstrels, organized in Buffalo, N. Y., in 1842. In 1854 he retired from the business. On May 9, 1862, while in a fit of temporary insanity he jumped out of the second story window of a house in which he resided in New York, and died on May 21, aged 47 years."

The troupe of E. B. Christy, son of the founder of negro minstrelsy, appeared in the Opera House, N. Y., to R. M. Hooley for a season, and is alluded to as the son of E. P. Christy and well known in the minstrel business. Died in New York April 6, 1866, aged 28 years. Another son, William A. Christy, died in New York December 8, 1862, aged 23. The close of the Civil War ended the slave plantation in the South and, therefore, plantation scenes, songs, dances ceased to attract public interest.

SAMUEL BARBER.

For Colored Comedians.

Bob Horner, of the Ebony Film Corp., Chicago, writes his company is in the market for one-reelers. He writes:

Now that we are to begin releasing of the General Film program April 15 we would be glad to hear from authors who are capable of writing productive comedies. Frankly, Ebony has purchased very few outside scripts; not because we did not want to, but because we have had such difficulty in finding scripts that would come up to Ebony's peculiar style. Our stock company is composed of colored comedians and they are capable of getting over any up-to-date story. We do not want any crap-shooting or old minstrel show stuff.

We are in the market for one-reel comedies with swift action of the ultra-slapstick variety, but the PLOT must be THERE, together with novel twist and humorous gags. We only want stories that will blend lively action and real PLOT simultaneously. We have let down the bars, and, instead of merely reciting the plot, authors are requested to write in detail most of the funny bits of business. Don't write that the hero pulls off a comical stunt to the chagrin of the villain. We want an idea of the comedy business, as well as comedy idea—so tell us just how he pulls off that stunt.

We are in a position now to purchase the best, and all stories that we will buy in the future must be well over the standard. L. J. Pollard, president and general manager, will assist me in rendering final decisions.

Here is a real market for the scenarioist who can deliver, as I am strong for out-side stuff—it is the only way to get variety in subject and treatment. Kindly submit your material to the undersigned personally, 725-727 Transportation Building, Chicago.

We are giving space to this because we have frequently been asked if there was any outlet for this sort of material. But get the idea that Mr. Horner is trying to convey. Don't get the idea that because the players are negroes you must load your scripts down with allusions to chicken stealing, pork chops, razors, or the like, and disabuse your mind of the idea that anything is good enough for "a lot of coons." They are regular actors, and want clean-cut, character stories. Send only those.

Bert Williams Receives Ovation With Ziegfeld's Midnight Frolic

New York, July 17. When Bert Williams, one of America's foremost comedians, made his initial bow before the audience of the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic, on the New Amsterdam Theatre Roof, last night, he received, as was to be expected, a hearty reception—almost an ovation. His engagement on the Ziegfeld Roof sets at rest forever the many rumors that had been current of a disagreement between manager and star, rumors that, however, had previously been denied in the strongest language by both Mr. Ziegfeld and Bert Williams.

Never was this dusky comedian revealed to better advantage than last night, when in splendid fashion he unfolded his quaint monologue in his dry, droll fashion, and gave us some songs which made an instantaneous hit with the capacity audience, earning him a storm of applause which sounded like a barrage and drumfire in one.

lasted one consecutive night, and it was two years later than he went into the business for good. Eph Horn began his minstrel career in Philadelphia in 1845. Charley Backus, who was with Birch and "Governor" Hyman in the San Francisco Minstrels, first blackened his face in California in 1852.

Birch took pains to make it clear that Thomas D. Rice, better known as "Daddy" Rice, was not the father of Negro minstrelsy, although frequently credited with that honor. He was an actor and took Negro parts in plays, Birch explained, "but he was not what we would call a minstrel." The part of *Jim Crow* made Rice famous, and the Negro comic opera, "Oh, Hush!" was written for him, full of such songs as "Coal Black Rose." Birch had very definite notions of what constituted minstrelsy:

"It is not enough for a man to be a singer, or an instrumental performer, or a dancer; he must be all, and more, too, to hold any rank in the profession. He may have one specialty, which is his card, but he must be useful in more ways than one."

No mere actor could step into minstrelsy, Birch believed; and he said that the really great actors appreciated the art of black face:

"But let one of those poor, howling barnstormers come in, a fellow who never will rise higher than general utility, and he's the chap who throws himself back with one thumb in the armpits of his vest and jing-

les 2 cents in his pocket, if he happens to have that much money, and says 'It ain't Shakespeare.' But just let him try to do it—that's all."

Perhaps these quotations from the most popular minstrel of his day will explain to our grieving correspondents why the ranks of the burnt cork heroes have thinned out.

As Messrs. Klaw, Fossdick and their associates interested in this historic revival of Negro minstrelsy are men of high ideals, it is safe to say that their views coincide with those of Billy Birch as published in the *Sun*. I make this statement to ease the minds of those who may become apprehensive lest we are to be again inflicted with the coarse,adder-mouthed minstrel man.

Modern Negro minstrelsy is to be conducted on a high plane and along artistic lines, and the Negro race and colored theatrical profession should profit, if anything, by this regeneration.

Theatrical - 1918

Individual Troupes.

ORIGIN OF NEGRO MINSTRELS

(By AL G. FIELDS.)

THE Jews have an old tradition that when God created man, minstrelsy was born. There have been minstrels since the early days of the world. In those days the wandering minstrel was the only means of spreading the news of the world. He wandered from place to place, and in verse and melody retold the happenings of the times. King David, with his harp of a thousand strings sang his way into the hearts of the multitudes.

Therefore, the history of American minstrelsy is all the more interesting. America nminstrelsy is the only distinctive American stage amusement. It had its origin in 1840. However, long before 1840 several actors blacked their faces and appeared in legitimate theatres between the acts, impersonating the plantation and roustabout steamboat darkey of the South.

Among the most prominent of these was T. D. Rice, nicknamed "Jim Crow" Rice, from a song of that name which he sung in character. This song made Rice famous. Rice's impersonation of the plantation Negro was true to life. It was an innovation and took the public by storm. He was more popular than the legitimate actors of the times. Rice's success influenced many actors to become Negro comedians. Many persons credited him with the origin of minstrelsy and so he was in so far as a single performer was concerned.

One night Rice carried on the stage a large bag. A small boy rolled out of the bag, costumed and blacked up to represent Rice. The boy imitated Rice in his singing and dancing. That boy was the late Joseph Jefferson of "Rip Van Winkle" fame.

Among those who took up black face impersonations was Billy Whitlock, Dick Pelham, Frank Brower and Daniel De-cature Emmett, all doing single turns. These four men were all talented musicians and comedians.

Early in the year 1840 a benefit performance for R. W. Pelham was given in the National Theatre, Chatham street, New York City. Pelham, Brower, Whitlock and Emmett were to appear in this performance. Emmett suggested that instead of appearing singly, they arrange the songs, choruses and instrumental mu-

sic, both comic and sentimental, and appear together. Emmett has often explained that the idea was to have a little fun with the actors appearing with them. Even the arranging of the chairs in a semi-circle for a first part, a custom which has been adhered to ever since—was accidental.

This minstrel first part was the first ever presented and captivated the public. It was the talk of New York City and engagements were offered them from all over the country. On a program dated January 31, 1843, they are billed as the Virginia minstrels. Their entertainments were out of the beaten path. Money flowed in upon them. Prosperity turned their heads. In the height of their success they sought new worlds to conquer. They sailed for England where they duplicated their American success, but prosperity was too much for them. They quarreled, separated and returned to America, each one determined to form a minstrel company of his own; but during their absence a dozen companies had been formed and the originators of American minstrelsy found themselves laboring for others and not one of them ever achieved very great financial success. Thereafter, Dan Emmett, the author of that most spirited of songs, "Dixieland," became famous the world over, but died penniless.

Emmett made his last professional appearance with the Al G. Fields Minstrels and is buried in the city where he was born, Mt. Vernon, Ohio. Emmett was greatly beloved by all. A monument has been erected to his memory.

To trace American minstrelsy from its origin is interesting. The Negro, its inspiration, is the most tractable and imitative of all humans. On the plantation, long before the white man began to imitate him, the Negro sang the songs and performed the dances that have made minstrelsy so entertaining.

When the Huguenots fled their country and settled in South Carolina they brought their customs and religious ceremonies with them. They danced the stately minuet, serving refreshments, particularly a large fruit cake made for the occasion. From this custom came the cake-walk dance of today. The Negroes, imitating the minuet of the white

folks with that animation characteristic of their race, made the dignified minuet of the courtly Huguenots the grotesque dance of the slaves of those days and of minstrelsy today.

In the minstrels of the early days all the customs of the plantation slave were introduced. The bones the Negro slaves rattled were imitations of the castanets of the Spanish and French dancers of those days. The tambourines were imitations of the tambourines of the Spaniards, and in imitation of the guitar the plantation Negro originated the banjo. The Negro gave it its name—banjo; and the significance of the word has never been traced beyond the origination of that crude instrument. ments of the American Indians.

There is no race so universally endowed with musical talent as the Negro. Music is a part of their nature, hence they soon mastered the tuneful instruments in lieu of the bones and tambourines.

There is no race so humorous nor a humor so infectious as the unctuous fun of the Negro.

There is no section in the world where the English language is spoken that the wit of the Negro is not appreciated. The actor who impersonates the German, French or Irishman, the Englishman or the Jew may find localities where his impersonations are not fetching to an audience, but the talented imitator of Negro life and fun finds ready response everywhere. The very simplicity of the Negro character is provocative of laughter.

Minstrelsy is responsible for many of the sweetest songs. Minstrelsy has always furnished music for the common people. The folk lore songs of our country are of minstrel origin, and have made their authors beloved by all.

When minstrelsy was originated this country had but tragedy, comedy and farce, as stage diversion. From minstrelsy came farce comedy and the musical shows of the times and in minstrelsy was born comic opera in so far as this country is concerned; the minstrel sketches of 40 years ago forming plots for them.

And the stage is indebted to minstrelsy for Joseph Jefferson, Stuart Robson, Edwin Adams, Edwin Booth, Tony Pastor, Bob Hart, a Methodist minister; Robert Fowning, a preacher; P. T. Barnum and Patrick Gilmore.

Sousa was a member of Simmons and Slocum's minstrels when Al. G. Field was serving his apprenticeship with that company. J. K. Emmett was a minstrel yodler and a drummer in the band.

Johnny Hyams, of McIntyre and Hyams, was a minstrel with the Al G. Field company. Signor Colloni of the Metropolitan Opera Company was popular with Will Collins when a tenor singer with Al G. Field.

Dan Rice, the famous circus clown began as a minstrel. Neil Burgess, Joe Murphy and Raymond Hitchcock began on the minstrel stage, as did Geo. M. Cohan and Dilla Collier.

Chauncey Olcott, Eddie Foy, Wm. Harris, Charlie and Dan Frohman, all began their theatrical career as minstrels.

Francis Wilson, Frank Daniels and James Powers, Al Jolson and many others whom I cannot recall, graduated from the minstrel stage.

In all the years gone by since the establishment of this organization it has ever been the ambition of Al G. Field to perpetuate the best tradition of American minstrelsy.

EDITOR'S NOTE—This article was especially prepared for THE AGE by Al G. Field, acknowledged to be the world's most representative minstrel man.

RACE MOVIE STAR PLAYS

IMPORTANT ROLE
Palatka Gorbata
Noble M. Johnson the Only Featured Movie Star of the Race Selected As Leading Male Support to Eddie Polo in the "Bull's Eye" Serial

Universal City, California, Feb 9—(Special to The Advocate.—For the first time in the history of the motion picture industry, a race actor is to be featured in one of the leading productions of the day, when the great Universal Serial, "The Bull's Eye," is released this week.

As "Sweeny Bodin," a renegade cowpuncher, playing opposite the noted king of stunts, Eddie Polo, Noble M. Johnson has been given the rare opportunity to demonstrate his remarkable ability as an actor and in comparison with some of the best material the profession has to offer.

Selected as one among thousands to fit the special requirements necessary as the leading heavy in support of the furious fighting Polo, Johnson's ability has therefore been recognized by the leaders of the industry and his work during the following 18 episodes will be watched with interest by the entire nation.

From "extra" with the Lubin Company to the leading "heavy" of one of the greatest serials ever produced in less than three years is a record any actor may well be proud of.

BRIDGEPORT CONN TELEGRAM

OCTOBER 25, 1918

SOME NOTED STARS.

Our reminiscent friends who have been marveling at the aptitude in negro minstrelsy of Hank White, a Vermont, who stayed in New England all his life, may

be interested to know that the first blackface act done in this country is supposed to have been performed in Boston. There, at the Federal-street theatre in 1799, a comedian named Young sang "The Gay Negro Boy" in character.

There was not, however, a constant stream of negro minstrelsy from 1799 to the present. Billy Birch was of the earliest decade of organized blackface art. He told the Sun that the first real troupe was the Virginia Minstrels, the principals in which were Dan Emmett, Frank Brower, William Whitlock and Dick Pelham. They formed their company in 1842 and came to New York a year later to play at Chatham-street theatre, where "Dandy Jim" was first sung.

The second minstrel troupe was Dumbledon's Serenaders, formed in 1843. Their leader, Major Dumbledon, was the first minstrel man to dress his troupe like gentlemen in the first part; the Virginians had played entirely in plantation rags. The third troupe was that of George Christy, who left the circus business in 1846 when he saw the possibilities of burnt cork, organized a team in Buffalo and brought it to this city, where he had much success at the Alhambra. The fourth minstrel company was Buckley's Peedee Minstrels, who made a fortune later in England. Dick Pelham, of the Virginia Minstrels, went abroad also, made money and never returned to America.

Billy Birch tried his hand at minstrelsy as early as 1844 in Troy, but, as he used to say, his first venture lasted one consecutive night, and it was two years later that he went into the business for good. Eph Horn began his minstrel career in Philadelphia in 1845. Charley Backus, who was with Birch and "Governor" Ryman in the San Francisco minstrels, first blackened his face in California in 1852.

Birch took pains to make it clear that Thos. D. Rice, better known as "Daddy" Rice, was not the father of negro minstrelsy, although frequently credited with that honor. He was an actor and took negro parts in plays. Birch explained, "but he was not what we would call a minstrel." The part of Jim Crow made Rice famous, and the negro comic opera, "Oh, Hush!" was written for him, full of such songs as "Coal Black Rose." Birch had very definite notions of what constituted minstrelsy:

"It is not enough for a man to be a singer, or an instrumental performer, or a dancer; he must be all, and more too, to hold any rank in the profession. He may have one specialty, which is his card, but he must be useful in more ways than one."

No mere actor could step into minstrelsy, Bich believed, and he said that the really great actors appreciated the art of black face.

"But let one of these poor, howling barnstormers come in, a fellow who never will rise higher than general utility, and he's the chap who throws himself back with one thumb in the armpit of his vest and jingles two cents in his pocket, if he happens to have that much money, and says: 'It ain't Shakespeare.' But just let him try to do it—that's all." New York Sun.

VAUDEVILLIANS DEMAND

New York Age 7-20-18

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

FROM all accounts the colored vaudevillian has been moved to righteous indignation and is waging a heated campaign in Harlem on behalf of the colored theatrical profession. There certainly is much room for improvement in this section of Manhattan where not one theater is conducted under colored management; but in order to bring about a radical change for the better the colored performer should not overlook this one important point: He can only succeed by enlisting the hearty cooperation of the public.

The trouble in Harlem to-day is that the public is literally fast asleep over the strange and unusual conditions that exist in a section peopled by nearly 70,000 Negroes. If the colored vaudevillian can wake up the public there is hope of better times ahead. If the theatergoer continues to sing: "Please Go 'Way and Let Me Sleep," prospects of the vaudevillian winning his fight are as thin as a wafer.

The colored theatrical folk in Harlem do not get their just deserts. This no one can deny. But public sentiment is usually the determining factor as to "who's who" and "what's what." So it behooves those engaged in a fight for just recognition to cease hurling verbal bombs and concentrate so that they may crystallize a healthy public sentiment in their favor.

Members of the colored theatrical profession are all "het up" and clamoring for certain concessions. Yet it does not necessarily follow that they will accomplish their purpose simply because they are in a war-like mood and making a lot of noise. Battles, whether in civil life or on the battlefield, are won through strategy. This is true despite the idea of some that effective results

are attained by assuming a belligerent attitude and then indulging in talk-talk-talk.

According to Dame Rumor colored vaudevillians temporarily received a setback in their setto with the management of the Lincoln Theater a few days ago because the methods adopted were not calculated to produce satisfactory results. The story goes that after openly condemning the owner of the theater for not according them the proper consideration a committee was appointed to call and arrange for a meeting of vaudevillians and the owner in question. However, the latter appeared more bellicose than the visitors and told them "Go see my attorney."

The principal charges against the Lincoln management are: That although the house caters exclusively to colored patrons the bills in recent months have been made up largely of white acts; that the house help, with the exception of ushers, is white—even to cashier and ticket taker.

Evidently the proprietor of the Lincoln Theater has assumed the position that she does not intend to be bulldozed into doing something that had not met with the approval of her patrons. If the colored people who support her theater demand the employment of colored house help it is most likely that we will see a house staff composed of Negroes—from manager down. The booking of colored acts also would be put on a basis more satisfactory to the colored performer.

It has come to my attention that one evening last week about fifty colored vaudeville performers assembled at the Lafayette Theater at the request of one of the lesser managers to discuss the question of Sunday night booking. The charge had been made that few represen-

tative colored acts were used by the management at the Sunday performances. Another proposition was brought up about the manager representing the colored vaudevillian down town.

I am glad to learn that the performers did not fall for everything they heard. For instance, it is said the manager touchingly told of the great service he had rendered the colored people of Harlem—of how he had turned down flattering offers with white theaters in order to remain with the colored people.

There is much that I could say relative to white men of mediocre ability, if any, trying to pose as a "Mosès" among colored performers, but I shall discuss the subject at length at another time. Personal experience has taught me that colored men can best represent themselves and that colored men of standing in the theatrical profession can get interviews with such men as Marc Klaw, E. F. Albee, C. B. Dillingham and F. Ray Comstock when some white men who make their living off Negroes and aspire to lead Negroes cannot get past the office boy.

But back to the Lafayette Theater conference. The offer to organize and represent the colored vaudevillian was flatly turned down, but an understanding was reached as to future Sunday bookings.

CORK COMEDIAN IS STUDENT OF NEGRO CUSTOMS

McIntyre, of McIntyre and Heath, Authority.

HAS DARKEY PREFERENCE

ROCHESTER N Y CHRONICLE MARCH 31, 1918

Noted Minstrel Man, Coming to Temple with Partner To-morrow, Is Partial to South Carolina Negro Because He Has an Irish Brogue

It was in November, 1868, forty-eight

years ago, that Jim McIntyre of the noted old blackface team of McIntyre and Heath who come to the Temple to-morrow, made his first appearance on the stage. He was only ten years of age when, a green country boy from Kenosha, Wisconsin, he arrived in Chicago, determined to become a great clog dancer. He appeared in an amateur try-out night in Kerwin's Variety Hall in Chicago, and the newsboys in the audience applauded so vociferously that the manager gave him an engagement at \$10 a week and "cakes," the equivalent of board.

A little later he travelled through the South with the John R. Robinson Circus, and began his studies of the negro, which he has continued ever since. After his circus experience, he became a variety performer in San Antonio, Texas, and there formed his partnership with Heath.

Mr. McIntyre has made such a close study of negro dialect, traditions, superstitions and stories that he is in great demand by folk-lore societies as an authority to settle questions in dispute regarding the manners and customs of the Southern darkey, it is said. He was a great friend of the late Joel Chandler Harris, and it is declared that the germ idea of many of Br'er Rabbit's most amusing adventures came from the minstrel man. Charles Egbert Craddock, the novelist of the Tennessee mountains, kept up a correspondence on the humor of the Southern negro with McIntyre and Heath for many years, according to friends of the comedians, and Mark Twain used to roar with delight at the comical stories told by the burnt-cork comedian, who liked the South Carolina darkey best of all, because, as he says, "there is a touch of Irish brogue in his dialect."

COLUMBUS JOURNAL JANUARY 25, 1918

BY COLORED ACTORS.

Marc Edmund Jones of New York has completed the scenario, "Loyalty of a Race," written by him for the national colored soldiers' comfort committee; and has submitted the same to Ralph W. Tyler, secretary of the organization, for approval.

The scenario provides for a three-reel film with a cast of all colored people. It will be a patriotic film. It is said that it abounds in pathos, humor and thrilling climaxes, showing the colored men enlisting "to make the world safe for democracy"; training in army cantonments, going "over the top" in France, and fighting like demons against the foes of America and the allies.

It is expected that the film will be ready to be shown in Washington next month. Later it will be shown throughout the country.

The object of the film is to remind the American people of the loyalty, the valor and the advancement of the colored race. There is no better time than this for such a film. It will be called "Loyalty of a Race."

Individual Troupes, etc.

Black Prodigal Son Gets Everything But Veal

N.Y.C. HERALD
OCTOBER 13, 1918

Remarkable Religious Festival Just Witnessed Near Lexington, Ky., Is Described for the Herald Magazine—How the Rev. R. Quarles, "D. D.," Teaches His Negro Hosts the Story of the Prodigal Son—Spectacular Scene When the Preacher Nearly Hits the Calf with a Hammer.

OBERAMMERGAU had its Passion Play, the Mindus have their days of intense religious frenzy, the Indian has his days of worshipping the manitou of his fathers, various races and nations have their "high days" for religious observance, but the negroes of Kentucky have outstripped them all. For they enact for the benefit of all who may come the parable of the prodigal son. There is no vast stage setting; there is no great amphitheatre of the sort that made the Coliseum famed; there are no trumpeters heralding the next joust of the tourney—there is nothing at the start save a very earnest negro preacher exhorting his flock to lead better lives and pointing to the fall and rise of the wanderer of Biblical lore as an example.

The Rev. R. Quarles, "D. D.," who has several country churches in Kentucky under his care, is the originator of these prodigal son spectacles. He saw some years ago that his race needed something besides the old-time meetings to rouse them, so he instituted this the most spectacular religious event in the country outside of Billy Sunday. The presentations began several years ago and have since been given every year when Mr. Quarles could obtain a place large enough to hold his crowd, his wanderer, the fatted calf and other brief paraphernalia needed for his act.

It is difficult to write, from a white man's viewpoint, about anything so laughingly solemn as this annual festival without calling attention to many ridiculous things, but the negroes themselves see nothing absurd about it; to them it is as solemn an occasion as it would be if the forgiving father walked out of the pages of the Bible and the old story was given with the original cast.

And, when it is all over, every year converts flock to the banner like flies to a molasses jar. They catch the lesson as well as the fervor of the moment, and the preacher's work brings in fourfold results. So for the story:—

The annual presentation of the parable has just been held at Lexington, Ky. It was probably a month ago that Mr. Quarles announced first that the spectacle would be carried out. Then he let his people simmer for a few days and then announced it for a large clearing about six miles west of the city. After a few more days he announced the date, and then began a scramble to get ready.

This is no pick-up-and-go-and-then-settle-down idea. It must be prepared for. The most delicious things must be cooked, the most intense excitement prevails. A way of getting to the scene of operations must be found, and frequently the employer of negro help misses a horse from his barn for that day, as for some the distance is long.

The young negroes, at whom the parable is aimed, preen themselves and generally find a dusky innamorata to take along. The older ones attend to the food. And when the day finally comes every negro that can reach the scene is decked out within an inch of his or her life.

So, on the recent Sunday that Mr. Quarles announced that the prodigal son was to be shown in the flesh, there was a great crowd present. At one side, where they had gathered in a mass, were many white people, who had heard of the unique plan of spreading the teachings of the gospel lesson and had gone to see for themselves.

It was a great moment for the Rev. Mr. Quarles. He announced a few songs and then preached a sermon to put the fear of the Lord in the hearts of his hearers. For hours, it seemed, he droned and he roared the lessons of the Bible until his audience was on the verge of shattered nerves. They wanted to see the big thing of the day. And as time went on they began to murmur about the time it took for "Brother Quarles" to finish.

Then, at last, Quarles launched into the story of the day. He told in his own way of the workings of the wayward boy's mind as he wandered out of the field of daisies into the paths fringed with primroses; how he moseyed along, dallying here and there a bit, until the "strange women" of the big world had taken all his money and left him in a hopen, alone with a lot of shucks to eat. And, thinking of the good fried chickens and myriads of cakes and pies lying in the offing waiting for some one to eat them, it is certain that there were mighty groans in anticipation, if not in reality.

Every once in a while some ancient dame or man, overcome by religious fervor, would spring afoot, shout "Hallelujah!" then sink back to a seat or fall to the ground in the ecstasy that is said to follow a manifestation of the presence of the Holy Spirit to this childlike people. But finally this was all over and the great hour was at hand.

Down at one corner of the great semi-circle was a little stick with a little white flag attached to it. The meaning of the white flag in such a concourse of black people is obvious. Advancing to this flag, Quarles raised it impressively and waved it slowly. As he did so there came from a small clump bushes some distance away a figure that excited the pity of all who were there. There were no shoes on the feet, there was no hat upon the head and the body was clothed in rags. This figure came haltingly across the field.

Now was the Rev. Mr. Quarles' chance. He, of course, was playing the big part of the magnanimous father. Casting a reproachful look at the sulking figure of the wicked elder brother in the background, the Rev. Mr. Quarles reached around behind a crowd and produced a new and up-to-date suit case. It is not known what sort of suit case the ancients used, but it is not believed it shone any more brilliantly in the afternoon sun than did the offering of the Rev. Mr. Quarles.

Swinging this at an angle of forty-five degrees, he started toward the approaching boy, who, when he saw his "father" coming, showed a disposition to duck, evidencing some stage fright. But a sharp command from Quarles brought him back in line, and, while white eyes stuck out of black faces all along the background, the two continued their march across the open.

At last they were near each other. The

"father" dropped the suit case and sprang one year to another. There are negro boys upon his hopeful, throwing both arms around in France to-day fighting who will remember him. The boy did likewise and they stood tight locked for a minute, while the crowd, recognizing a climax, cheered. But more was to come.

Holding the boy as if he could not let him go, the Rev. Mr. Quarles opened the suit case. From it he took first a new hat, which had been donated by a Lexington merchant. This he put firmly upon the boy's nappy head. There came from the suit case next a pair of shoes, likewise kindly donated by "one of our leading merchants." These shoes soon enclosed the supposedly bleeding feet of the wastrel. Then there came from this Pandora's receptacle a battered bathrobe, which the boy at first did not seem to recognize for what it was. But when he understood it was the purple and fine linen that is spoken of in the parable he suffered it to be draped about his form.

Then the two—the father, who had stayed at home and built up his fortune so it would be of use to the youngster after he had ripped up things generally while a-vamping, and the erring youth—came across the field to the audience, being cheered every step of the way by some, while others, recognizing the sincere solemnity of the preacher and his charge—yept Isaac Craig—were silent with emotion.

Arriving nearer the crowd, the Rev. Mr. Quarles ordered that the fatted calf be led forth. Now, this calf had been borrowed for the afternoon only, and here was a hitch, for if the calf were killed there would be real money to pay out. But anyway out came the calf, and it uttered a melancholy bleat as it was overpowered. The Rev. Mr. Quarles made the presentation speech, and then grasped a hammer and made as if to strike the little animal. But he didn't—the motion was all. Then the calf was led back to its owner. To a sceptical newspaper man, after the meeting was over, the Rev. Mr. Quarles when pressed admitted that one time, in the fervor of the presentation of his argument, he had struck a calf too hard and the result cost him more than fourteen dollars. And one little stroke on a calf's head with a hammer is not worth that.

And after that there remained only the elder brother to chide. The boy who had been lost and was found was allowed to retain the hat and shoes. The whereabouts of the old bathrobe are not known. But after the spectacular event there remained the food to get rid of, and a few thousands of hungry negroes can put away a lot of eatables.

So ended the 1918 presentation of the parable of the prodigal son, according to the Kentucky negro's idea of it. Laughable to hundreds, to thousands of his black compatriots it is of as deep significance as was the Passion Play before the war took Anton Lang and his co-players from the stage and put them on the battlefield.

Does the negro presentation have any good effect from a religious standpoint? That question can best be answered by a counter query—does it do any harm? The negroes themselves believe the Rev. Mr. Quarles is a superior being, sent to give them this great lesson on one Sunday in every year, and to them it means something to hope for from

BERT WILLIAMS A HIT IN MIDNIGHT FROLIC

Bert Williams was accorded an enthusiastic welcome when he appeared before a large and representative audience on the New Amsterdam Roof Monday night—or to be more exact—Tuesday morning. After his last number he was applauded to the echo for nearly five minutes. In fact, he stopped the show, for there were three more acts to follow and it was past 1 o'clock. The renowned comedian did not go on until 1 o'clock.

In the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic Bert Williams is using new material in every particular—new songs, new jokes and new dances, and everything went over big.

Monday evening Mr. Williams received many messages from well-wishers. Some sending telegrams were Wil Rogers, Harry Kelly, Bill Fields, C. H. Johnson, Frank Carter, Lester A. Walton, Eddie Canter, Gus Minton and Gene Barnett. The majority sending word of cheer are members of Ziegfeld's Follies from which the comedian resigned because of lack of material some weeks ago.

The New York Evening Journal in referring to Bert Williams' appearance in the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic said:

"When Bert Williams, one of America's foremost comedians, made his initial bow before the audience of the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic, on the New Amsterdam Theatre Roof, last night, he received, as was to be expected, a

hearty reception—almost an ovation. His engagement on the Ziegfeld Roof sets at rest forever the many rumors that had been current of a disagreement between manager and star, rumors that, however, had previously been denied in the strongest language by both Mr. Ziegfeld and Bert Williams.

"Never was this dusky comedian revealed to better advantage than last night, when in splendid fashion he unfolded his quaint monologue in his dry, droll fashion, and gave us some songs which made an instantaneous hit with the capacity audience, earning him a storm of applause which sounded like a barrage and drumfire in one."

NOBLE JOHNSON IN DEMAND

The immense publicity being given Noble M. Johnson, through his remarkable work in "The Bull's Eye," Universal serial, has made a most wonderful impression upon the public and an increased demand for pictures in which he has appeared, regardless of producing company, has resulted. The old Lubin and many of the Universal releases in which he appears are being called for in great numbers and the re-bookings on the Lincoln Film is taxing their fourteen copies to capacity. With the final episode of "The Bull's Eye" completed, Mr. Johnson contemplates taking a much needed rest, provided the government does not select him as one of its national workers for the war fund.

NEGRO MINSTRELSY

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

NEGRO minstrelsy, from present indications, will soon be with us once more. For a number of years its popularity has been on the wane and the pretentious minstrel troupe of the Primrose and Dockstader type has not graced the boards for nearly a decade. But it seems as if this form of theatrical diversion is to majestically make its reappearance on the wings of the war, and it would not be a bit surprising if minstrelsy was the chief form of amusement in the trenches "Over There" before many moons.

President Wilson is quoted as having told prominent theatrical men who called on him recently to discuss the fuel situation as it relates to theatres, that he always enjoyed a good minstrel show and would ever keep in the archives of his memory, the great pleasure Negro minstrelsy afforded him years ago.

Among those who are actively advocating the organization of minstrel troupes among the draftees are Raymond B. Fosdick, chairman of the War Department Commission on Training Camp Activities; Jasper J. Mayer, the alert young secretary of the commission, and Marc Klaw, the theatrical man, who is chairman of the Military Entertainment Service Commission.

The decision was reached this week by these officials to proceed with the organization of minstrel groups at the various cantonments. George M. Cohan is to supervise the work among the white draftees and the writer is to serve in a similar capacity among the colored draftees. Mr. Cohan is to assume his new duties at Camp Meade, which is near Baltimore, Md., while I shall at first give attention to the talented soldier boys at

Camp Upton, assisted by colored theatrical men of ripe experience. Beginning of Negro Minstrelsy For the past week the New York Sun has carried articles from its readers who have been involved in a friendly discussion as to the beginning of Negro minstrelsy. The Sun, in its issue of January 30, saw fit to enter the controversy by publishing the following editorial under the caption "Beginnings of Negro Minstrelsy":

Bert Williams

Quits "Follies"

Not Given Enough Work. New York, June 12.—Bert Williams, Premier Comedian of the American stage, has quit the "Liz Field Follies" with which company he has been connected for several seasons—since the death of his partner, George Walker.

The reason given is that Mr. Williams felt he was not given enough work to do. In other words his name was carried to help the show, but he was not given parts commensurate with his ability or reputation. Mr. Williams is the first and only colored man to star in a white company, and when he first joined it he was given all the spotlight, but in late seasons he has been pushed back.

BERT WILLIAMS BACK WITH THE FOLLIES

Through the persistent demand of a public which he has pleased for years, Bert Williams, the famous Coloured comedian, has been recalled to the Follies and resumes his work with that popular organization this week. This is just another evidence of the possibility of making one's self indispensable. It is, too, an ample refutation of the silly story that this great comedian had gone back, this genius of the comedy stage had no longer anything to offer the public, as if Bert Williams could ever fail to entertain and tickle the risibles of a fun-loving people!

CHICAGO THEATRICALS

(BY LESTER A. WALTON)

IN Chicago, over on the South Side, where the colored population is large and growing daily, a small-sized theatrical war is being waged between the Grand and Avenue theatres for the patronage of the colored theatregoer; and yet, strange to relate, only a few months ago one of these houses was none too particular about accommodating Negroes.

The Grand Theatre, situated at State and Thirty-first streets, has always catered to colored people, but the Avenue Theatre, at Indiana avenue and Thirty-first street, until recently was luke-warm toward its colored patrons and at times the management showed an inclination to segregate them.

As more colored people are moving into the district where the Avenue Theatre is situated and white people are moving out in large numbers, the theatre management has evidently seen the handwriting on the wall and now is making an extended effort to lure colored people to the house. Colored acts are being played at the Avenue Theatre weekly to invite the favorable attention of Negroes, although there was a time when the colored vaudevillian was persona non grata.

The Avenue Theatre is a pretty house, with a seating capacity of twelve hundred. So far not a colored person has been seen in an official capacity in the front—not even a cashier—although the aim of the management is to get a large colored patronage.

To date the Grand Theatre has had the better of the argument, and for the past three weeks in particular has been doing a capacity business. The Smarter Set, with the Whitney boys and the tuneful mu-

sic written by C. Luckeyth Roberts, have been packing them in the State street house. The company was booked for one week and was held over for two.

The only theatre in Chicago under colored management was the Star Theatre, owned by Jesse Binga, the banker, and leased to Teenan Jones. It was a motion picture house, situated at State and Thirty-ninth streets, and was closed a few months ago. It is said that during the thirteen months Teenan Jones had the place he lost about \$1,500.

The situation in Chicago is similar to that existing in New York—there is not a colored house in town under colored management. Things are different in Philadelphia and Washington, and we ought to take our hats off to Messrs. Gibson, Thomas and Turpin, who are making money at the Standard, Howard and Booker Washington theatres, respectively.

It is reported that Philadelphia is to have another theatre under colored management, and that it will be ideally situated, with a seating capacity of fifteen hundred. Well-known Negroes who stand well in the financial world are said to be behind this project.

In many cities the authorities are forbidding the exhibition of that obnoxious photo play, "The Birth of a Nation." Mayor Bacharach of Atlantic City is the last official to put a ban on the picture being shown to the public.

Among those to applaud Mayor Bacharach on his stand was the Philadelphia Bulletin, which said

"The 'Birth of a Nation' was a mischievous and offensive pictorial show in times of peace; it is even more so in times of war; and it ought to be done away with at all

times as a largely false and absurd representation of things which are declared to be facts, but which are the products of imagination. The special reason, however, why it is more than ordinarily undesirable to be portrayed in time of war is that it tends to excite racial hatreds when the government is calling upon many thousands of black men in every quarter of the Union to fight for this country in the National Army and when most of our soldiers of that race—excepting those who were either executed or imprisoned for life terms for violations of military law in Texas—have been reported to be showing the right kind of diligence and zeal.

"Mayor Bacharach, of Atlantic City, very properly took such ground the other day in forbidding the exhibition at that place, although his prime reason was doubtless apprehension as to the disorder that it might invite from the considerable colored population which it would offend. At a time when our country should everywhere be as free as it possibly can of the effects of internal prejudices and feuds, it would be wrong to keep this motion picture alive, accurate. But in view of the fact that it is not only a distortion but an intolerably misleading one, its discontinuance and abandonment ought to be regarded as a patriotic duty when it justly gives occasion for the sort of observations by which Mayor Bacharach justified his own action."

Has it ever occurred to the readers of these columns that many of the Mayors who ignored the requests of colored and white citizens to forbid the presentation of "The Birth of a Nation" were defeated for re-election—notably Mayor Mitchel of New York and Mayor Curley of Boston?

COLUMBUS DISPATCH
JANUARY 24, 1918
Film by Colored Actors.

Marc Edmund Jones of New York, recognized as one of the best scenario writers, has completed the scenario, "Loyalty of a Race," written by him for the National Colored Soldiers' Comfort committee, and has submitted it to Ralph W. Tyler of Columbus, secretary of the organization, for approval. The scenario provides for a three-reel film, a cast of all colored people, and will be a patriotic film. It is expected that the film will be ready to be produced in Washington about Feb. 5, where it will be billed for a two weeks' run, and then it will be shown throughout the country. It is expected this film will be seen in Columbus this spring.